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A ROSARY

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A ROSARY

• BY

JOHN DAVIDSON



LONDON

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. FATE	I
II. SHAKESPEARE	2
III. ODE ON THE CORONATION OF EDWARD VII., OF BRITAIN AND OF GREATER BRITAIN, KING . . .	6
IV. MAJORITIES	12
V. QUESTION OF THE MESS-ROOM	17
VI. THE PALE WOMAN AND THE GAUNT MAN . . .	18
VII. SAYING OF AN UNTAMABLE MEDIOCRITY . . .	20
VIII. OVERHEARD IN EPPING FOREST	21
IX. A LANDSCAPE	24
X. STYLE AND STYLISM	25
XI. AT CROSS-PURPOSES WITH LIFE	25
XII. USES OF WOMEN	28
XIII. A LANDSCAPE	30
XIV. A PARABLE	31
XV. A QUESTIONABLE UTTERANCE	35
XVI. TEMPERAMENT	39
XVII. OPINION	43
XVIII. AN UNDERBRED MAN	44
XIX. A FABLE	46
XX. FORCE OF SUGGESTION	49
XI. ILLUSION OF SIMILARITY	50
XII. THE WIND	51
XIII. SONNET FROM "LA REINE FLAMMETTE" . . .	57
XIV. VULGARITY	58
XV. AUTHORS	59

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
XXVI. BUTTERFLIES, FROM "POUR LA COURONNE"	67
XXVII. DESPAIR.	68
XXVIII. A NEUROTIC CYCLIST	71
XXIX. THE MUSIC-HALL	75
XXX. PORTRAITS AND ROMANCE	76
XXXI. HOPE	84
XXXII. MALIGNITY	85
XXXIII. LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY	86
XXXIV. THE POWER OF THE PEN	88
XXXV. A ROOKERY	89
XXXVI. CRYING FOR THE MOON	90
XXXVII. THE PRIME COST OF SOUTH DOWN MUTTON	91
XXXVIII. CRITIC AND AUTHOR	92
XXXIX. THE WASTREL	99
XL. KNIGHT-ERRANTRY	102
XLI. THE LOOSE WAVE	112
XLII. WOMEN AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS	113
XLIII. SIN	118
XLIV. VILLANELLE	120
XLV. PLAYS AND PLAYWRIGHTS	121
XLVI. A WONDER OF THE WORLD	133
XLVII. THE MAP OF ENGLAND	135
XLVIII. CUCKOO FAIR	136
XLIX. CHAUCER	141
L. CONTEMPORARY POETRY	142
LI. CONSCIENCE	142
LII. ECLOGUE OF THE DOWNS	143
LIII. ECLOGUE	157
LIV. IBSEN	164
LV. SONG FROM "LA REINE FIAMMETTE"	174
LVI. ENNUI	175

CONTENTS

vii

	PAGE
LVII. AT THE DOOR	177
LVIII. LIFE AND DEATH	179
LIX. THE DYER'S HAND	179
LX. LIKENESS AND UNLIKENESS	182
LXI. HIGHEST AND BEST	183
LXII. SYMPATHY AND RESPONSIBILITY	183
LXIII. EVOLUTION	184
LXIV. PERSONALITY	185
LXV. A THING IMPOSSIBLE	185
LXVI. A DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE	186
LXVII. AT TWENTY-ONE	186
LXVIII. BLAKE	188
LXIX. GOD	191
LXX. NECESSITY	191
LXXI. SHAKESPEARE'S FLOWER	192
LXXII. A MODERN INSTANCE	193
LXXIII. THE SOUL	195
LXXIV. SAPPHO	196
LXXV. SUNSET IN THE WEST END	202
LXXVI. CRITICISM	203
LXXVII. FORKS	203
LXXVIII. THE SONG OF THE LARK	204
LXXIX. MR. MEREDITH AND NATURE	205
LXXX. THE POET	209

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A ROSARY.

I.

FATE.

"IF a man escapes suicide at twenty, crucifixion at thirty-three, insanity at forty, and St. Helena at forty-six, he may do something."

"How may, but there are worse rocks ahead."

"Indeed?"

"There is Coventry, for example, which is not by any means a City of Refuge: he might be sent to Coventry."

"True; but he could still work in Coventry."

"Very busily; ropes of sand are spun there, the best in the kingdom, warranted to dissolve in the making all the time."

II.

SHAKESPEARE.

“THERE comes up to LONDON in his twenty-third year a penniless ruffian from Warwickshire. Muscular, with a thick neck; fierce gray eyes of extraordinary size and lustre; dark red hair upon a great and exquisitely-shaped head. He is hungry for pleasure and power; these, first of all. Secondly, he wants to escape from his wife and children. Thirdly, he has determined to restore the fallen fortunes of his family. Having no connections, there is only one thing for him to do. He goes to the theatre, thrashes the bully of the loafers, and secures the bulk of the tips for holding horses, etc. He improves his wardrobe; quotes poetry to the young bloods; gets talked of by the management; is interviewed; found to be very presentable, with a good voice; is taken on as super; brags his way into a speaking part; criticises everybody and everything savagely; is allowed to try his hand at revision; succeeds, and makes the most of it; pooh-poohing and elbowing the other authors aside;

insists on a share in the concern; takes home all the manuscripts he can lay hold of; becomes indispensable; in fine, attains the dominant partnership. He puts out his money to advantage, buys his father a coat of arms, and the best house in Stratford. Then, when he himself has been thrust aside by the new men, he leaves London and sulks out the last three years of his life alone and friendless. To power, except in his theatre, he never attains, the statesmen who tolerate him receiving his remarks on politics with a glance at the ceiling, just as Ludwig of Bavaria whistled when Wagner offered advice in matters of state. But of pleasure he has his fill—and of pain; and into his plays he pours his joy and misery, making the theatre his confessional and the public his confessor. That is Shakespeare—Shakespeare at last, shown up by foreigners.”

“I do not think so. Shakespeare was a great impersonality.”

“Ancient nonsense!”

“I understand you. Do not think that I have any belief in the gentle Shakespeare of the shopmen’s calendars—a sort of simpering curate gone

wrong. I would even agree with you that Shakespeare must have conducted himself somewhat in the manner of a ruffian on his arrival in London. Indeed, I have been told that an unknown man, penniless, and without university or other recommendations, has still to practise ruffianism in a measure at the outset of his career. But Shakespeare disliked the *rôle*, especially when he had made acquaintance with the true ruffian—Parolles, Pistol; and dropped it as soon as he could. When I call Shakespeare an impersonality I do not mean that he was without ambition, passion, character; I do not mean that the finest and most poignant passages in his plays are not precisely those where his own experience helped him most; but I mean—”

“You mean, when you call Shakespeare a great impersonality, that he was a great personality.”

“Without personality it is of course impossible for a person to be. I must get at my meaning some other way. This is it. Shakespeare was a different order of being from men like Carlyle and Tolstoi; there was little in him of the fierce reaction against the world which distinguishes the

reformer and the prophet. All men, writers and others, are impressionists. Carlyle and Tolstoi struck back when the impression hurt them; Shakespeare, under the whips and scorns of time, cried out in 'Lear,' cursed in 'Timon,' but he never hewed at the world as Carlyle did; he forgave it, and shook hands a little scornfully in the 'Winter's Tale' and the 'Tempest.'"

"I do not like to hear you call Shakespeare an impressionist."

"But he was an impressionist. We are all impressionists. As I have often said, most people have souls like wafers, that can take only a slight impression. Shakespeare's soul endured the signet of the universe without resentment; he cried out, but he submitted."

III.

*ODE ON THE CORONATION OF EDWARD VII., OF
BRITAIN AND OF GREATER BRITAIN, KING.*

WE crown our King, the son of her whose name
 Has hallowed monarchy ; we crown our race,
 Accomplishing a thousand years of war,
 Of travail and of triumph greatly borne.
 Wherefore in England's lordly measure, tuned
 When the long-buried past resurgent sought
 Embodiment anew, when recent shores,
 Unknown, but dreamt-of, in the night of Time,
 Appealed to fate for utterance virginal,
 And the profound insatiate soul of man
 Required a deep-tored, more material song :
 In England's lordly measure, armed and winged
 When England conquered sea-room for her ships
 And first began to mould the modern world,
 It will become our honour to acclaim
 This noble birth of Time, matured at length,
 Imperial Britain, risen above the sea,
 Enthroned and of her destiny aware

A ROSARY.

7

When every eager pulse of Matter ached,
To yield its new idea and be glad,
An ancient subtle thought, a loftier hope
Than any mediate life of plant or beast,
Imbued the inmost womb, and urged a way,
Throughout the range, of being, climbing up
From lowliest cells to forms uncouth that walk,
Abashed and wistful that they are not Man,
The deep primeval aim, so long delayed,
So late accomplished; for the steadfast Earth,
A Spartan mother, passionate as Love;
Patient as Time, implacable as Truth,
In travail with her son nine epochs, vowed
Millenniums of remorseless discipline
To shape the hero of eternal dreams.

The steadfast Earth, the parent, treasure, home,
Pleasance and sepulchre of all her kin,
Assured of her design, by simple craft
And great undid the parasitic cord
That tethered Britain; closed and soldered well
The magic hoop of ocean set with storms,
Wedding this isle for ever to the world.
At once from orient valleys, folk on folk,

Horizon-haunting Aryans westward thronged,
 Instinctive wanderers borne in nebulous drifts,
 Till Rome with iron axle wound an orb
 Of light far-gleaned and thrice empurpled power—
 A sanguine orb high-pitched in heaven awhile,
 Whose crimson beams on Britain's argent cliff
 In setting splendour lodged and tarried long,
 Before mortality asunder burst
 The power and light of that luxurious star.
 Foam-necked forthwith the war-keels' plied the
 deep;

Hengist and Horsa, Cerdic, Ivar, Cnut,
 The Conqueror—Jutes, Saxons, Angles, Danes,
 Norsemen and Normans into Britain swayed,
 The fertile, temperate, envied isle estate.
 Confronted there, they wrestled tribe with tribe
 Of those who ventured furthest, dared the most,
 Through sounding centuries at Brunanburgh,
 Senlac and Bannockburn and Flodden-field.
 Molten and founded in one cast of men,
 As in a furnace heated seventy times
 With love and hate the fuel and the flame
 That feed the roaring blood-red hearth of war;
 And yoked with willing or reluctant clans,

Their greater travail seized them when the dawn
Of pure intelligence—discovered shores
And vision whetted to behold with power—
Assailed the mediaeval firmament,
And launched the world-debate of old and new
Whose present rumour shrouds the echoing past.

The doom that thundered in their blood—that
beat

In every brimming star whose sea-washed lamp
Beckons the sleepless rapt adventurer—
Athy art unhallowed destinies, nor stayed
By falling empires, and the desperate clutch
Of palsied creeds in ruined fanes aghast,
O'er many a smitten field and sanguine sea
Advanted on hazard, terror, and the night
With Liberty and Justice for the World.

Thus they, magnanimous, a guide innate
Obeyed unwitting, till a drowsy fire
That smouldered southward flamed to heaven in
wild

Belated war as of the Heptarchy—
Tribe against tribe again of that grim folk

A ROSARY.

Who venture furthest, dare the most, and are
 The valour of the earth: not otherwise
 Could Boer and Saxon weld enduring peace.
 Then was it Britain o'er the tropics flung
 Her bridge of ships from England to the Cape;
 Then trusty British people, east and west,
 Vaulting the Indian and Atlantic main
 From blood-bought continents and treasured isles,
 In Britain's day of need upheld her hands,
 Forbade her foes to doubt one heart and strength
 Inspired and armed her sea-linked Ocean-State,
 And gave the world to know how great a thing
 Had risen at last above the tide of Time,
 Imperial Britain, mighty and aware.

So forged, so tempered, like the adamant
 In Nature's crucible, our sovereign race
 Thrust through the earth its way: a breed of men
 Concerned alone to be what them behoves;
 Forthright regards, looking not askance
 Through doctrine, lifeless vision turned to stone
 And lenses warped and flawed, but seers indeed
 Perceivers deeply versed in certainty,
 Who challenge light with light of faithful looks,

A ROSARY.

11

Within whose souls a lamp self-nourished burns
As on an altar fed with sacred fire ;
Doers, endurers, fighters, poets, kings,
The genius of the Universe that leaves
Its shadow in the abyss, and unperturbed
By ill-conditioned good or evil blent
With passionate aspiration, every hour,
Sloughs off the past to reach a truer truth,
A beauty more divine, a destiny
Still unimagined in the dreams of fate.

We crown our King, we crown our sovereign race,
And garner now the harvest of our blood
Broadcast in battle for a thousand years,
The seed, the token, the courageous price
Of Liberty and Justice for the World—
Our blood that with imperial purple dyes
The quartered globe, that stains and turns to wine
The shadowy depths of ocean's jewelled cup,
Making a sacrament of all the earth.

IV.

MAJORITIES.

A LABOURER, breaking flints by the roadside, sat down at noon to drink his cold tea and munch his bread and onions. A Hawker and a Beggar passing that way from opposite quarters, joined him; and the three shared their provender and discoursed of life and livelihood very wisely. But before they knew where they were they disagreed upon some unimportant point. The Labourer seized his hammer, the other two brandished their staves, and a triangular duel began which might have ended in a broken head or two—and might not, for they were very discreet warriors. The issue remained undecided, however, because a Philosopher came by. This Philosopher had asserted, in season and out of season, that life is a battle for recognition, and that those who risk death in order to assert themselves become Masters, and that those who prefer life under any condi-

tions become Slaves. Some, very ignorantly, had called him a Nietzscheist; others, who knew at least that there were men before Agamemnon, had declared him to be a confirmed Hegelist, and had inquired with infinite scorn if he carried the Absolute in his waistcoat pocket; others had insisted that he was an atheist; others, again, had called him a perverted voluptuary; and other some, aiming at a comprehensive and therefore paradoxical curse, had denounced him in bitter terms as a Sensualistic Puritan; but all were of one accord, friends and foes, believers and unbelievers, in holding him to be an enemy of mankind, and had, on that account, hustled him out of the town.

“Hold, men! hold!” cried the Philosopher, as soon as he drew near enough to make himself heard.

The Labourer, the Hawker, and the Beggar desisted promptly, and, leaning on their guiltless weapons, attended to the remarks of the Philosopher.

“You have hit upon a very inferior method of waging the battle of life,” said the Philosopher.

"You ought to debate the matter. I shall gladly act as umpire, and award the victory to him who holds fast by his self-assertion."

"And what will you award to him who doesn't?" asked the Labourer.

"To him who surrenders his claim for recognition," answered the Philosopher, "I shall award his single self-consciousness."

"Go on!" cried the Hawker. "We want no umpire here, and less language. This is a meddling fellow. Take that!" And without more ado he hit the Philosopher on the head.

"And that," said the Beggar; "and that," said the Labourer, plying stick and hammer.

"How now!" cried an Artist, coming over the brow of the hill with a sketch-book under his arm.

"Three against one! Shame!"

"But," said the Hawker, "he planted himself on us as umpire."

"It doesn't matter what he did," said the Artist. "Three against one is not Art."

"But it's good enough in War," said the Philosopher, suddenly angry; "and very tolerable Philosophy too. Men are entitled to take every

advantage of strength and numbers. We live in an age of the divine right of majorities."

"What have we here!" cried the Artist scornfully. "A scrimmage of conceited metaphysicians?"

"He calls you conceited metaphysicians," said the Philosopher, appealing to his late assailants.

"And we won't stand it," said the Hawker. "We have the divine right of majorities on our side."

Whereupon all four fell upon the Artist, and would have left scarce a whole bone in his body, had not a Fool who haunted the neighbourhood chanced to come that way.

"Asses!" cried the Fool. "Beasts! Leave the honest gentleman alone! Four against one! How did this quarrel arise?"

"Why," replied the Hawker, "the Labourer, the Beggar, and I fell out about a matter of no consequence; and this Philosopher took upon himself to pacify us. While we were basting him for his impudence, up comes the Artist and calls us a set of conceited metaphysicians. Now you in your turn interfere; and each one of us means to set his individual mark on your carcase."

"Not so!" cried the Fool, stepping aside. "Ignorant men! Are you not aware that the source of all quarrels is misunderstanding, and that in order to avoid misunderstanding it is necessary to make no attempt to understand. Men can never understand each other. Each is walled about in adamant. All speech, written and spoken; all Art—do you know what Literature, Philosophy, and Art are?"

"My business!" said the Philosopher.

"It's no matter," said the Artist.

"Very poor potatoes!" said the Beggar.

"Very inferior road metal!" said the Labourer.

"But we're willing to be enlightened," said the Hawker.

"All speech, all Literature, all Art," said the Fool, "is only the tapping and scratching on the walls of their cells of prisoners who have never been anything else but prisoners, and can have no closer communication with each other than such muffled noises as their adamantine walls permit."

"Prisoners!" exclaimed the Hawker, who had just completed a month for petty larceny and was

A ROSARY.

1

trading without a licence; "I was never in gaol in my life, nor anyone here. Get out!"

Immediately the five attacked the Fool, and so mishandled him that he went lame for the rest of his life.

"Good!" said the Beggar when they had kicked the Fool into the ditch. "There is a public-house by the wayside not a furlong off. Let us rest and refresh ourselves."

And they did so,—at the Beggar's expense, for he was the richest man in the company.

V.

QUESTION OF THE MESS-ROOM.

QUESTION of the mess-room: "What is a cad?"
Answer by an Impersonality: "A cad is one whom snobs dislike." "*À la bonne heure!* And what is a snob?" "Ask the cad."

Remark by an Unregenerate: "To be converted to become a snob or a cad."

VI.

THE PALE WOMAN AND THE GAUNT MAN.

“WHAT is this that’s wrong with me?” said the pale, dark woman, answering the gaunt, dark man. “I am the woman who refused to suffer. I declined all responsibility, all relationship. My life was to be a long holiday; and I set about to enjoy the world. My father being an invalid, it bored me to wait on him, so I left him to the doctor and the nurses. My lover wanted to marry me; but marriage would have brought children and many duties, therefore I refused him. I travelled, I studied, I perfected myself in the Art of Life, and left Conduct to the Philistines. I could not endure the thought of disease, of poverty, of sin. I moved only among healthy, happy, irresponsible people, who knew nothing of care or sorrow. But they possessed a secret I could never surprise. I have not experienced an hour’s satisfaction since I first took thought for myself. The woman who fled

from suffering ran into the arms of *ennui*. And you; what is the matter with you?"

"I," said the gaunt, dark man, "am he who determined to understand. Good and evil, right and wrong—these, I thought, are the blinkers on the eyes of men by which Bigotry, Society, Use-and-Wont prevent their seeing too much in order to drive them more easily. I blamed nobody; I praised nobody; I neither loved nor hated; I would not punish; I would not reward; I would be intelligent and understand. And, indeed, everything and everybody became to me as clear as crystal. Yet I am full of terror and misery, and I know that I understand nothing at all."

"We are monuments of chagrin," said the pale, dark woman, with a harsh laugh.

"We may as well commit suicide in company," said the gaunt, dark man.

"Not to-day," said the pale, dark woman. "I am going to hear the new fiddler. But to-morrow, if you like, at this hour."

"Oh, to-morrow?" said the gaunt, dark man. "To-morrow I am going to see someone I haven't met for twenty years. But the day after."

"The day after?" said the pale, dark woman.
 "I can't make the appointment, for there's no saying what I may be doing the day after."

"We'll leave it open, then," said the gaunt, dark man.

VII.

SAYING OF AN UNTAMABLE MEDIOCRITY.

A SAYING of one of those Infinite and Untamable Mediocrities who rise to great power and glory in all ages: "It is in their attack that men reveal themselves; the object of assault is always their own original sin. There is no more exalted quack than Carlyle; no more intolerant Philistine than Matthew Arnold."

VIII.

OVERHEARD IN EPPING FOREST.

A TRAMP asleep in a brake in Epping Forest was roused by the singing of a Nightingale in a hawthorn bush beside him.

"Tee-oo, tee-oo, tee-oo-coo-too,
Tsee, tseetsy, pitsirrurst,
Coo-orr-orr, ptksooa, coo-roo-true,
Tsatsoo, dlodlitzidurst,"

went the Nightingale.

"Hello!" cried the Tramp, "are you singing in your sleep?"

"I wakened singing," said the Nightingale.

"And I," said the Tramp, "wakened in the act of making a poem—a thing I never did before either awake or asleep."

"Let's hear your poem," said the Nightingale.

"I remember only one verse," said the Tramp.

"Repeat it," said the Nightingale.

A ROSARY.

"It went this way," said the Tramp.

"Heaven? It never was created.

The other place I know quite well ;

For when my soul was amputated

I seared the stump in Hell."

"That's a very bad poem," said the Nightingale
"and I don't know exactly what to think of a man
who has such poems in his sleep,"

"I wakened making a poem too," said a Truant
on the other side of the bush—a lusty schoolboy
he was, who had run away from school because of
the spring.

"Let's hear it," said the Nightingale.

"I remember only two verses," said the Truant,
"and what they mean I don't know."

"No one ever can tell the meaning of songs and
poems; they are just themselves," rejoined the
Nightingale. "Repeat the verses, boy."

"They went this way," said the Truant.

"Her name is Pagan Polly ;

She dances by the sea.

She was once her mother's dolly ;

Now she belongs to me.

"Sometimes, when we mustn't be jolly,
We bend a stubborn knee;
But we dance after Pagan Polly
On the margin of the sea."

"Good," cried the Nightingale. "What do you think of this?"

Le bon Dieu m'a donné une femme
Que j'ai tant-tant, tant-tant battue.
Que s'il m'en donne une autre,
Je ne la battrais plus-plus-plus
Qu'un petit, qu'un petit, qu'un petit!"

"Why," said the Tramp, "this is a more excellent song than the other."

"I'm glad you like it," said the Nightingale.

"Where did you learn it?" asked the Truant.

"I learned it," replied the Nightingale, "in a country called France."

Whereupon the Nightingale flew away to another bush, while the Tramp and the Truant addressed themselves again to sleep.

IX.

A LANDSCAPE.

THE wind was easterly, and its shrill pipe made itself heard as soon as the road left the valley and set itself against the downs. But here the norther slopes are fledged with beech, and the hills look comely even in the bleak weather of a winter April. Violets and hyacinths diapered with purple the russet beech-mast, though the cowslip hoarded their gold in their pale green chalices. The white-starred branches of the blackthorn sprinkled the prevalent bronze and purple of the covert with sparse sprays of silver; and the emerald banners of the downy, crisp, and pleated beech-leaves claimed the time for middle-spring, in spite of the attempted piracy of winter. In a bight of the land, the white, chalky plain, shaded with the sprouting down of the young corn, showed where the tide of harvest will run far up, and surge and break against the swelling hill.

X.

STYLE AND STYLISTIC.

STYLE is always imperceptible: stylism one notes at once. Stylism is the attempt to achieve style—that is to say, the attempt of self-consciousness to be unconscious; the attempt to say something not in its own manner, but in a predetermined manner. Scott has style; Stevenson is a stylist.

XI.

AT CROSS-PURPOSES WITH LIFE.

WHEN a Scotsman finds himself at cross-purposes with life, what course does he follow? He may say to himself, "I will go and walk about the downs." Or he may say, "I will write a great poem"; or "I will go and preach in Hyde Park." He may say this, and he may say that, but he invariably does one of two things. He either sits

down and drinks deeply, thoughtfully, systematically of the amber spirit of his country, or he reads philosophy. Verily, to the ordinary layman and heavily-burdened wayfarer, above all to Scotsmen at cross-purposes with life, philosophy is a sad temptation. Even to the man in the street it occasionally happens that the riddle of the universe grows vehement in its appeal; and, however secretly and shamefastly, he re-examines the interpretations that have been wrought out by others; sets himself to answer the problem anew; finally, burns his books, shaves, dines at a restaurant, and returns to Piccadilly and the bosom of his family.

Once I shut myself up with the downs behind and the sea in front, and read many books that I had read before, and many that were new to me. Remembering that both Sterne and Brunel, the former at least preceptively, the latter by example, recommend horizontal repose as the surest eliminative of cerebration, I lay on my back for days at a time, thinking, or trying to think; but that luxurious attitude seems to be reserved for the happy sublimation of humour and mechanical

device ; its effect upon me was only to sink me more deeply in the turbid solution to which my reading and brooding had reduced all things. Not a moment too soon I shifted the venue ; climbed out of the metaphysical lye and reached the downs.

In a belt of trees above an ill-ploughed field a throstle sang a shrill prelude ; weeks ago he thought the spring had come, the season was so mild. His pipe will be mellower later on. Down in the churchyard, in the early summer, the passenger (the churchyard here is a thoroughfare for pedestrians) may catch a tapping sound among the gravestones—the mavis cracking snails with savage glee ! The snail is the mavis's oyster : and when he has lubricated his throat with a dozen or so, his notes become the purest and most spiritual to be heard in the grove.

Suddenly the bells rang out from the church tower. It was Saturday afternoon, and the ringers were practising. At the very first bob of the bells, a flight of starlings in a high swart clump of twisted boughs, resenting the artificial sound, sweet as it seemed in the distance, or prompted

by the well-known professional jealousy of the passerine order to emulate music so space-filling and important, broke out into a frenzied chattering, surged madly into the air, and swooped down upon the gardens of the sea-coast town. The Norman tower from which the ringing came stood out a reddish brown against the gray-green sea. Not a sail was visible. Like an enormous shelf of glossy, oily, well-planed slate, the long, broad water sloped up against the sky. A slab of dingy opal, greasy, with a pale emerald flame travelling over it transparently, the sea leant on the stony firmament as on a wall. Behind, the sinuous downs, gray, green, and red—old land, budding crops, and fresh earth—rocked and swayed with the motion of the world.

XII.

USES OF WOMEN.

“WOMEN should be left to educational and ecclesiastical employment, and to the amusing arts.”

"Good. Let *them* keep up a knowledge of Latin and Greek, of astrology, theology, history, and all ignorant inventions and lying reports of the past.

"Yes; and let *them* write the novels and the plays: indeed, the pantomime-boy and the lady-Hamlet should take entire possession of the theatre; it should be as indecent for men to act as it once was for women."

"And for a man to write a play should be the unpardonable sin."

"It should. And the Houses of Parliament should be given over to women too; and——"

"Young women, you mean."

"Young women? Oh! Not old wives, as now! I see! Yes; and women should have entire control of finance and all businesses."

"Leaving men?"

"Leaving men free to govern, to do justice, to advance in science and the sciences, to be poets and philosophers, to be silent and intelligent, and to walk about and understand the universe."

XIII.

A LANDSCAPE.

THE wind roared in the hedge, and the fieldfares were blown about the downs. A twittering and chaffering of diverse birds, like the sounds of ebony drumsticks struck together, of silver castanets and muted triangles, pinked and laced the thunder of the wind. Larks crested the concert fitfully, trying their voices. The high wood surrounding the town stood out against the sea, its coral buds and black timber blended into masses of purple. In the west, across the Adur, the white gable of the Pad Inn haunted the foot of Cissbury Hill like a steadfast apparition. Masts rose among the chimneys. A thin cloud veiled the sun. The sea, dark and shining, shook like a lake of quicksilver, and a heavy curtain of vapour hid the horizon.

XIV.

A PARABLE.

A PROTAGONIST came into the Market-place early in the morning, and, seeing a pedestal vacant, stepped up and took possession. He found himself above the Churches, the Schools, and the Shops; he overlooked the Earth and the Sea and beheld on either hand the sunrise and the sunset.

The first of the townspeople who entered the Market-place to begin the Religion, the Studies and the Business of the day failed to see him, or saw him without observation. In a little while, however, a Busybody noticed the Protagonist standing on the pedestal. "What are you doing there?" he cried.

The Protagonist made no reply.

"Come down, sir!" cried the Busybody.

But the Protagonist heeded him not.

Many people joined the Busybody, and shouted

to the Protagonist to come down; and shortly, as the news spread that someone had got upon the pedestal, the whole population poured into the Market-place as angry as it could held together, because in his secret heart every man-jack had appropriated the pedestal to himself.

For four hours the multitude shouted without ceasing, "Come down off that pedestal! Come down off that pedestal!"

But the Protagonist kept looking at the sun.

At last, in the evening, when the multitude had roared itself hoarse, the Protagonist addressed them and said, "Good people, when you see anyone standing higher than you, it is ignoble to bid him descend: the only becoming and courageous course is to get up beside him."

Now, as the pedestal was higher than the highest steeple, the multitude thought that the Protagonist flouted them, for they were unaware that he had made but one step of it. With cries of rage they endeavoured to overturn the pedestal; but, being a monolith of adamant based in the centre of the Earth, it withstood all their efforts. Then they brought ladders and fire-escapes; how-

ever, the highest reached but halfway up. Some mounted on towers and pinnacles with hydrants and lariats, yet they could not come at him to dislodge him.

Whilst they were consulting what to do next, one who had taken no part in the siege of the Protagonist, but had remained preoccupied with his own thoughts, cried out suddenly, "How did you get up?"

The multitude turned upon the Questioner with looks of admiration and astonishment, in their very natural anger it had never occurred to them to consider the means of the Protagonist's exaltation. Facing about immediately from the Questioner and gazing up at the Protagonist, they awaited his reply in breathless silence.

The Protagonist said, "I stepped up."

Much perplexed the multitude looked again towards the Questioner; and he, standing upon a bournestone at the back of the Market-place, looked earnestly at the Protagonist for the space of a minute. Then he made a sign with his hand, and the multitude, understanding, opened a way for him. Without halt or hesitation, the Questioner

walked across the Market-place and got up beside the Protagonist.

“It is delusion!” cried the Busybody, breaking the silent amazement of the multitude.

But first one and then another, taking his courage in his hands, followed the Questioner; and when a score or two had mounted the pedestal, some of them resenting, humanly enough, the Protagonist's priority, seized him and flung him down into the Market-place, where his corpse became serviceable as a stepping-stone. In a little while everyone who could lift one leg after the other stood upon the pedestal, above the Churches, the Schools, and the Shops, overlooking the Earth and the Sea, with the sunset and the sunrise on either hand. And the paltriest souls who got up were able to congratulate themselves, much to their astonishment, on this at least, that “there was plenty of room at the top.”

XV.

A QUESTIONABLE UTTERANCE.

POETRY is not always an army on parade: sometimes it is an army coming back from the wars, epaulettes and pipe-clay all gone, shoeless, ragged, wounded, starved, but with victory on its brows; for Poetry has been democratized. Nothing could prevent that. The songs are of the highways and the byways. The city slums and the deserted villages are haunted by sorrowful figures, men of power and endurance, feeding their melancholy not with heroic fable, the beauty of the moon, and the studious cloisters, but with the actual sight of the misery in which so many millions live. To this mood the vaunted sweetness and light of the ineffective apostle of culture are like a faded rose in a charnel-house, a flash of moonshine on the Dead Sea. It is not now to the light that "the passionate heart of the poet" will turn. In vain the old man cried:

“Authors — essayist, atheist, novelist, realist,
 rhymester, play your part,
 Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living
 hues of art.

Rip your brothers' vices open; strip your own foul
 passions bare;

Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—
 forward—naked—let them stare.”

This ironical Balaam-curse has become a message. It must all out. The poet is in the street, the hospital. He intends the world to know that it is out of joint. He will not let it alone. With whatever trumpet or jew's-harp he can command he will clang and buzz at its ear, disturbing its sleep, its pleasures; discoursing of darkness and of the terror that walks by night. “Down with Reticence” — that kills the patient; “down with Reverence” — for whatever has become abominable. Do they delight in this? No; it is only that it is inevitable. Democracy is here; and we have to go through with it.

The newspaper is one of the most potent factors in moulding the character of contemporary poetry.

Perhaps it was first of all the newspaper that couched the eyes of poetry. Burns's eyes were open; Blake's, perhaps, for a time; and Wordsworth had profound insight into the true character of man and of the world; but all the rest saw men as trees walking; Tennyson and Browning are Shakespearian. The prismatic cloud that Shakespeare hung out between poets and the world! It was the newspapers that brought about what may be called an order of Pre-Shakespearianism. It was in the newspapers that Thomas Hood found the "Song of the Shirt"—in its place the most important English poem of the nineteenth century; the "woman in unwomanly rags plying her needle and thread" is the type of the world's misery. The "Song of the Shirt" is the most terrible poem in the English language. Only a high heart and strong brain broken on the wheel of life, but master of its own pain and anguish, able to jest in the jaws of death, could have sung this song, of which every single stanza wrings the heart. Poetry passed by on the other side. It could not endure the woman in unwomanly rags. It hid its head like the fabled ostrich in some sand-bed of

Arthurian legend, or took shelter in the paradoxical optimism of "The Ring and the Book." It is true William Morris stood by her when the priest and the Levite passed by. He stood by her side, he helped her; but he hardly saw her, nor could he show her as she is. "Mother and Son," his greatest poem, and a very great poem, is a vision not of a woman but of a deserted Titaness in London streets; there was a veil between him also and the world, although in another sense, with his elemental Sigurds, he is the truest of all Pre-Shakespearians. But the woman in unwomanly rags, and all the insanity and iniquity of which she is the type, will now be sung. Poetry will concern itself with her and hers for some time to come. Not much of the harlot: she is at ease in Zion, compared with actual woe. The *offal* of the world is being said in statistics, in prose fiction: it is besides going to be sung. There it is in the streets, the hospitals, the poor-houses, the prisons; it is a flood that surges about our feet, it rises breast-high. And it will be sung in all keys and voices. Poetry has other functions, other aims; but this also has become its province. Will it be

of any avail? No; nothing that can be done avails. Poor-laws, charity organizations, dexterously hold the wound open, or tenderly and hopelessly skin over the cancer. Poetry has no spell to cure it. The world cannot be changed until it falls back into the sun.

XVI.

TEMPERAMENT.

THERE was once a tall, fair Scotswoman, with a perfect, oval face, and large pale eyes. In her twenty-fourth year she married a painter and set herself to destroy his temperament. I met her in her father's house shortly after she had spoiled her husband, body and soul; and she told me the story herself. "He kept talking to me," she said, "of temperament, temperament, temperament. What is temperament? Do you know? Does anyone know? I have no temperament; but I suppose he had, for he was different from me. He liked all kinds of stupidity and foolishness—little children, religious people, romance, and sentiment.

A ROSARY.

After the honeymoon, when he went back to his easel, he nearly swooned at the sight of it; for I had determined to see of what stuff his temperament was made, and had painted a leer on the faces of his figures. He tore up the canvas and began anew. As soon as he had a face drawn, at night I put a leer into the eyes or a wicked smile on the lips. He went to his easel every morning shaking with terror. I had now fully made up my mind that he should get rid of his temperament and become as strong as me, for I rather liked him; he was very handsome. So I persevered with his faces, and was amazed at his persistence. At last one morning he asked me to stay beside him while he painted. He drew and coloured the heads of three cherubs with extraordinary rapidity and force, the practice which my device had secured him having increased his skill immensely. The faces were sweet and beautiful; and he asked me if they were not so. I said I rather liked them, but that I saw nothing particularly sweet about them: charming little imps, I called them. 'Then I am a lost man,' he cried. 'Something terrible has gone wrong with me. Day after

day I paint what I think beautiful faces; these that I have just done seem to me adorable. You see them as they are, leering and malicious; and to-morrow I too shall see them as they are. Some subtle paralysis has attacked me.' Next morning, as usual, he found his faces impudent or malignant. I comforted him, and told him to struggle no more against his own nature, but to follow this inferior bent which proclaimed itself in spite of him. 'I will,' he said; 'it may work itself out.' Then an evil spirit took actual possession of him, and he painted loathsome and horrible things. He was a weak man; his temperament had only been degraded, not yet destroyed. One night I changed his diabolic into angelic faces; and in the morning he came to me weeping tears of joy. 'I have worked it out,' he cried. 'I am free of it. Yesterday, while I designed what I thought the most wicked group of countenances ever imagined, I was painting divinities. Come and see them.' I excused myself till the afternoon; and he, happy and jubilant, went out to walk off his excitement. In his absence I changed his divinities into idiots and maniacs. When at length he led me to his

studio he had no eyes for anything but me. I felt him watching me as I stood in front of his picture. I looked at it, and then with cold surprise at his glad, eager face. The blood left his cheeks like a lamp that's blown out; he glanced at his picture, and fell in a tremor on the floor. I helped him to a seat, placed myself opposite him, and told him how I had manipulated his canvases in the hope of enabling him to master his temperament. When he realized what I said, he slid from his chair glaring at me as if I had been a wild beast about to devour him. I moved to help him again, but he shrank from me, shrieking, 'Keep off!' He crept backwards on his hands and knees, growling and glaring at me hideously. He reached the door and kicked at it as a beast might, flinging out his legs. He has never stood erect since; he lives in a stall and eats out of a manger; the asylum doctor says he cannot recover. What is temperament? Have I destroyed his, or is it now rampant? How weak he was!"

XVII.

OPINION.

"OPINION," said Mr. New-wine, "is like linen, easily soiled. It ought to be changed at least once a day."

"No," said Mr. Old-bottles; "opinion is like the skin, easily enough soiled, but as easily cleansed; and only to be changed by gradual and imperceptible process. The rapid-change artists of opinion have no opinions, precisely as the employers of rouge and poudre-de-ris may be said to have no complexions."

"For my part," said Mr. Equable, "I think opinion is neither the dress nor the skin of the mind, however useful such imagery might be in debate. Opinion is properly only the blush and pallor of the mind, its freckles and its rashes. It is powerful, and can and does kill, as a cold or a fever may; but it is not part of the constitution of the mind. We must learn to say 'I know,' not 'I think.'"

XVIII.

AN UNDERBRED MAN.

AN underbred man of wealth, amazed and delighted to find himself accepted at last, and oozing with complaisance and self-congratulation, began to talk at a dinner-party of the difference between white wine and red.

"There is too much to digest in red wine," he said, smiling across the table. "I come out in spots if I drink it: temporary spots, of course," he added, in a confidential aside to his left-hand neighbour, a calm, smiling youth. "Hock, on the other hand—I can drink bottles of it without knowing it."

Glancing round the table and noticing imperceptible gravity or a faint smile above every plate, he conceived he had made an impression, and continued more briskly: "I prefer hock, everything considered, to champagne. The boy likes champagne; the grown man, hock. Curiously enough, however, I prefer mutton to beef, pheasant

to grouse, whiting to salmon, and *café au lait* to *café noir*."

Glancing round the table again, he was surprised to find the eye of the genial host fixed upon him with a certain menace, and all the guests talking quietly in couples, except his neighbour on the left.

"Ah! you are waiting to confab with me," said the underbred man. "I seem to have put my foot in it," he added.

"Both feet," said the calm youth; "but you needn't be concerned. I have seen and heard new arrivals of all kinds—politicians, authors, artists, manufacturers—and they say the same things precisely: some, like you, out of sheer goodwill, and some, precipitately, in an effort to overcome an embarrassing self-consciousness."

"Indeed, sir!" said the underbred man in subdued tones, looking with awe at his companion.

"Yes," replied the calm youth; "they all say it; we expect it of them. You mustn't regard it as a mistake. On the contrary, it illustrates the solidarity of the species. Out it comes: 'I prefer white wine to red; and, for that matter, I would

rather drink hock than champagne any day. Mutton, of course, well boiled, with caper sauce; and for birds, give me a plump pheasant, tasting like green corn. Coffee? Yes; but with milk. Once for all, the fancy for *café noir* is the merest pretence; nobody likes it. Oh, I have heard it all a thousand times! It is very beautiful; it is quite cosmical."

"Quite?" queried the underbred man, turning pale.

"Cosmical," said the calm youth, syllabically.

"Ah, to be sure," rejoined the underbred man, relieved upon one point, although dubious upon the general scope of the calm youth's remarks, and silently ruminative for the rest of the evening.

XIX.

A FABLE.

"YES; one's past haunts one," said the Badger.

"And there are huntsmen that tar it on," grumbled the Fox.

"In some cases," said the Badger. "What I

regret—occasionally, when I can't sleep—is my clumsiness and the awkward things I have done.”

“Umph!” said the Fox. “What about Farmer Jenk’s honey?”

“Oh!” cried the Badger, “that was all in the way of business. I am a robber to trade, like yourself.”

“I never did a clumsy thing in my life,” said the Fox; “but I am often troubled with remorse. Especially the sound of ‘Tally-ho!’ makes me remorseful. Then I think of the harmless birds I have killed and eaten; and the future looks black.”

“Remorse, cousin,” said the Badger, “is, as you must very well know—it’s in all the books—the most wretched kind of self-pity. Remorse proceeds from an indigestion of events; and the mind, you must remember, is in the abdomen. You eat some dandelion; get your liver right; and churn up these untoward happenings into experience. That’s the cure!”

“It’s very easy for you to talk. It’s not only my stomach and liver: it’s my conscience that troubles me.”

"Fiddle-de-dee!" cried the Badger. "Conscience is simply enlarged liver."

"How do you know?"

"My good fellow, it's in the books!"

"Is that really the case?" said the Fox, somewhat comforted. "I'll take a turn at the dandelions then."

"A capital salad," said the Badger. "Goes well with a spring chicken."

"Indeed!" said the Fox, wistfully. "You recommend the spring chicken as part of the cure?"

"A *sine qua non*," cried the Badger.

"Well, if it's medicine I don't mind," said the Fox.

"Medicine? It's the very life of you!" said the Badger.

"It becomes clear to me," said the Fox, as he climbed to the top of a knoll, from which he could survey several poultry-yards, "that what we call mind, conscience, etc., has no real existence."

"Except physiologically," said the Badger.

"Quite so," said the Fox.

XX.

FORCE OF SUGGESTION.

IT has been suggested to mankind that there *are* formative influences, and the hypnotic subject proceeds at once to invent them. But there are no formative influences. Men are what they are. The bread-and-batter I ate thirty years ago is no part of me now. I know nothing about it. I do not remember, nor do I wish to: I go on. It is the 'unfortunate gift of expression that has seduced men into speaking and writing: one says a thing and another accepts it, because he also wishes to say a thing and to have it accepted. Thus the legends accumulate, and The Legend assimilates them all. To me it is strange that men should still suppose, because they can speak and write, that therefore they can say what they think and feel. It is not true: thought and feeling are themselves, and cannot be expressed: words are another thing—themselves also: even action is a poor proxy. Speech, written or oral, represents cerebration and

emption as little as the House of Commons represents Great Britain. Virgil wanted to burn the "Æneid": *it* was not what he meant. It is probable that the whole literature of the world is a lie.

XXI.

ILLUSION OF SIMILARITY.

THE crowning example in our time of the illusion of similarity is, of course, the purblind theory that Bacon wrote Shakespear's plays; but I have no doubt the cecity of this will be eclipsed two thousand years hence by Mr. Herbert Spencer's Independent Observer, when he finds among the *débris* of an extinct civilization a page of the "Iliad" and a few "Leaves of Grass," and forthwith discovers that the Homeric hexameter developed out of the amorphous rhapsody of Walt Whitman.

XXII.

THE WIND.

WHEN the wind blows on the Sussex shore it takes possession of all the precincts of land and sea and sky. From whichever quarter it comes, it is an invasion and pervasion—a sack of the town, a raid on the Downs, a sweeping of the Channel, and a rout of the clouds. It sings its own triumph, and laughs like a conqueror. Above the town on the shoulder of Thundersbarrow Hill the pageant of its victory can be heard, felt, and seen.

“I am amazed at you. I see into your mind; it is displenished. Not a thought, not a memory, not even a regret in a dusty corner! Do you think it becoming at your time of life to permit yourself such an indulgence?”

“Surely. The world begins anew every morning for those who choose. What are the thoughts, memories, and regrets of the entire population of the globe in the presence of a new day? Every dawn, every second begins the future. Listen!

Through the song of the wind I can hear the moments dropping into the abyss, and no power can fish them up again. Why should we lug about with us the memory of the past? Happy recollections? Yes; but these are only recalled when the present is tiresome or bitter. Let us *be* happy; and happiness will come."

"Monstrous! I thought you, of all men, knew that happiness is impossible!"

"Nothing of the sort! With a brilliant wind like this it is impossible not to be happy. There's oxygen in it—ozone—life. And it's flung at you; it envelops you; it bathes you; pounds and pinches you; makes you over again."

Just at that moment they came on a Shepherd lying in the lee of a hawthorn bush, and humming to himself a passage from the second act of "Tristan und Isolde."

"Shepherd, he here is angry with me because I have made a clean mind of it this morning, and come out to let the wind have its will. Am I not right to do so? For example: do *you* indulge in vain regrets?"

"Never," said the Shepherd.

"But," said the other, "I don't understand this. May I ask you some very personal questions?"

"Fire away," said the Shepherd.

"Did you ever have a grievous disappointment?"

"Oh, yes!" answered the Shepherd cheerfully.

"Did you ever do anything that could be distinctly called wrong?"

"Sometimes," answered the Shepherd, with a graver cheerfulness.

"Did you ever make a fool of yourself?"

"Often," answered the Shepherd, with what was for him a somewhat hard glance.

"Then you can tell the marines that you have no regrets."

"I have no intention of doing so," answered the Shepherd; "but if a marine were to ask me just now, I should certainly say as I say to you—No, I have no regrets. That I have had regrets is as certain as that I shall have them, life being what it is; but I do not keep them long. I have another use for my experience than to regret it."

"And what is that?"

"To digest it, of course. If I hadn't been able

to assimilate my experience I should have been dead in my teens."

"Bless my soul, do you mean to tell me that you are not ashamed of your mistakes?"

"Always at the time in despair over them," answered the Shepherd. "But I do not call them mistakes; it is only fools who make mistakes: wise men at once translate everything into experience. A sound mental mastication, and a eupeptic conscience are the first of gifts. Further, any man summing up in himself the species, can digest, if he is worth his salt, the whole misery of the world: he can distil perfume from rottenness, weave you beauty out of filthy rags, and wring a song from the heart of despair."

As we turned away, the Shepherd resumed his tune from "Tristan"—

"Those who death's dark night boldly survey,
Those who have studied her secret way—
The daylight's falsehoods, rank and fame,
Honour and all at which men aim,
To them are no more matter
Than dust which sunbeams scatter."

The wind was west by north-west, exceedingly fresh and virile, young, bold and splendid. Everything bowed to it, made way before it; it was Spring walking over the waters, riding gloriously over the land. Trumpets and drums went before it, the music of its march. The stark hedges ruffled it bravely, as the wind went by; the grass-green, budding crops, soft like down, rippled at its feet. Over the shires from the Atlantic it trampled with the rush of a charging host across Erringham Valley, took Thundersbarrow Hill at a leap, and reached the North Sea through Sussex and Kent.

As for the ruffling hedges, their pink spines and coral buds glowed all day, and their stiff branches creaked. Out of the ploughed land yellow breasts and brown wings started in gusts, wheeled, twittered, and dropped as if blown down; nor was the first lark more fortunate; once and again he rose, a forlorn hope against the swing and thunder of the wind; every time he was outsung, outclassed, and tossed back to earth; and at every new defeat he sprang up, well aware that he had been beaten, but with a stout nonchalance essaying it once more; it was practice and training for him. "I

know," he seemed to say, "that the t
quickly when the whole earth and sky will be full
of my singing."

On the slope of Thundersbarrow Hill, among
the green down of the budding crops, newly
ploughed land lay in stripes—an alloy of clay and
chalk inlaid with malachite; for the sun and the
wind have a rich palette and a magic spell where-
with to colour, clothe, and transform the naked and
the uncouth. Like sheets of copper from which
the silver gilding had begun to fade, like webs of
cloth-of-Bagdad woven of silver and gold, the clay-
chalk fallows spread fresh from the plough., A
dark red drift of poppies on a ground of emerald
clover overran them last summer; in the coming
season they shall rustle in Ceres' rich brocade.

Where the plough had never been the turze was
waiting, dark and gloomy—a prickly, sceptical
plant. Once, twice, many times it burst into gold;
but how can it tell that its good fortune will follow
it every spring? At any rate, it can possess its soul
in patience, and look out and down upon the
world, sinister and aloof.

The broad, wide sea, like molten silver founded

in a shelving mould, whose confines were the shore and the horizon, weltered and curdled in crisp, smooth, resplendent curves as the mail-clad wind tramped over it—the tread echoing to the sky, and yet barely felt upon the glittering plain, aerial strength and lightness triumphing at a touch. The Norman tower stood black against the silver; like ebony, clouds crossed the sun and lined the dazzling shield of waters. In all the precincts of the land, the sea, the sky, the wind of spring came conquering and to conquer.

XXIII.

SONNET FROM "LA REINE FLAMMETTE."

WITH blossoms gathered in the Milky Way
 I twined a wreath for her whose least desire
 My captive soul would evermore obey;
 But she disdained my gift of starry fire;
 So I disdained myself, and flung my life
 Against the wall of many a leaguered town,
 And leapt before the vanguard to the strife;
 But, seeking for a grave, I found renown.

I summoned then the ocean to my aid,
 And wooed from wintry winds the kiss of death;
 But all the waters murmuring delayed,
 And all the sullen tempests held their breath.
 No hope for me beneath, no hope above;
 Death scorns my life, my mistress scorns my love.

XXIV.

VULGARITY.

VULGARITY is the affectation of the manners of a class to which one does not belong, and is common in all ranks. An authentic person will, of course, have his own individual manners as well as those of his order—unless he becomes a misanthrope, when he *loses* all manners, or a victim of anthropophobia, when in his terror he is apt to *affect* all manners.

XXV.

AUTHORS.

Successful Author. Unsuccessful Author.

U. A. You have got into a very inferior, very helpless mood.

S. A. How is it inferior?

U. A. Because it is the mood of the partisan.

S. A. The mood of the partisan may be inferior, but it is not helpless. Party is the combined lever-and-fulcrum that moves the world; the party in power, the lever; the opposition, the fulcrum.

U. A. Yes; but I think the principle of western politics should be confined to its own sphere. The enduring example and the necessity of internal antagonism in the political world have had a baleful influence on Literature; because Literature ought not to be divided against itself. Literature, intended to be the most powerful of levers, is splintered into an assortment of single-sticks, shillelaghs and shinties, all playing against each other. Were these

united in one great beam, with the world for fulcrum we could shift the universe.

S. A. How is the lever to work?

U. A. By a study and statement of things as they are.

S. A. But how could that help? Schopenhauer has not made the world any better, although he has stated its true nature once for all.

U. A. I deny that Schopenhauer has stated the true nature of the world; but you will find one of the most perfect statements of the world I am acquainted with if you complement Schopenhauer with Nietzsche—*Il Penseroso* with *L'Allegro*. Briefly, Schopenhauer says, "the world is evil and this evil is bad and to be shunned." Nietzsche says, "the world is evil and this evil is admirable and to be desired." The one prays, "lead us not into temptation"; the other, "deliver us up to the evil."

S. A. Well. How do you propose to integrate your lever?

U. A. We have the Incorporated Society of Authors.

S. A. We have; a trade union antagonistic to

Literature, since it concerns itself entirely with business.

U. A. Surely; we must have the fulcrum properly adjusted. The membership is close upon a thousand—a thousand men of letters united for a common aim, the protection of their own property.

But it will not end there. I foresee a great future for the Incorporated Society of Authors. It is the seed of a new hierarchy, a government by the holiest, that is by the healthiest, the fittest. How would you define Literature? I should call it the Art of Understanding. And here you have a thousand men of letters all devoted to the Art of Understanding, which is the prime correlative of the Art of Governing—a thousand ready-made Governors inspired by the loftiest motives, awaiting the fullness of time to take command of the world and lead it in the way it should go. It is an astonishing and uplifting thought. The maturity of this purpose, inherent in the Society of Authors, will be achieved in the miraculous manner of the beanstalk of fable the moment the Society becomes fully conscious of its destiny; and the method of stimulating this consciousness in the Society itself

and of arousing the attention of the world is one and the same, namely, a study and statement of the world as it is. In poems, plays, novels, articles, no new dreams, no old mythologies, no inventions, no praise or blame of anything; only a statement of the world as it is. Kings, priests, legislators, philosophers have hewed, racked, shaped, and criticised, while the world steadily became worse, and a rare voice here and there stated it hopelessly or with some idea of betterment. But if the whole force of the intelligence of Britain were turned steadily on a statement of the world as it is, and if the forty millions that inhabit these islands were got to realize the true nature of the world, I see only one alternative in place of suicide at the rate of a million a day.

S. A. And what is that?

U. A. An invitation to the Society of Authors to take charge for pity's sake and try to amend the dreadful thing they had revealed.

S. A. The Incorporated Society of Authors may develop into something important, but I doubt it. The world of letters was never in itself a republic, and is not likely to become an oligarchy

over others. I am entirely satisfied with the Society as it is: auditor of accounts and agreements, reformer of business abuses and counsellor of the inexperienced. Personally I should resent the slightest attempt to control the work of its members. Suppose it were to undertake some such scheme of self-aggrandizement as you suggest; it could be brought to a beginning of success only by the methods of the Society of Jesus—secrecy and a graded obedience; and if it emerged into any position of power at all, your men of letters would share the fate of the Jesuits, because any possible open-air government is stronger than all the secret societies.

U. A. You are unwilling to believe that the world changes—I do not say improves. The kaleidoscope is turned, and click-clack, the pattern shifts. Power has been in the hands of kings, priests, aristocracies, oligarchies, plutocracies—

S. A. Stay now! Plutocracy—that is what we have in France, America, and Britain, countries supposed to be democratic. In Britain we have practically manhood suffrage; the power is therefore in the hands of the working-men; and what

do they do with it? They elect to represent them in the House of Commons their masters and employers, and can do nothing else; because the franchise is an automatic machine which wealth alone can set in motion. The Incorporated Society of Authors as a governing body would be somewhat unwieldy; the inevitable result—a committee of management, equivalent to Parliament under the present regime; and within that, a bureau taking the place of the Cabinet. The members of that committee of management and of that bureau would be—as it is now in all elective bodies—precisely those best able to be elected, and not by any means those best deserving election: good fellows, like myself, with one hand on the public pulse and the other in the public purse, providing the stimulant or the pill as indicated—entertainers gauging their success by their bank account. I, for example, who purvey pseudo-religious fiction, would naturally become Minister for Public Worship; our champion detective-storyist would go to the Home Office; our Prime Minister—

U. A. Oh, but you interrupted me before you heard the details of my scheme. No single author

ought to be better able to secure election than any other author—so far as money goes, at any rate; therefore every author's private means, and the proceeds from the publication of printed matter of every kind, must be pooled in order that every member of the society may have the same amount of income.

S. A. (Laughs consumedly.)

U. A. It is no laughing matter! Such an arrangement as that would itself detach the Society of Authors from *this* worldliness, and be a promise and proof of its authentic mission as the one competent governing body. I understand the full significance of what I propose: it means that every member of the Society of Authors must become what is called a fanatic, and be willing to sacrifice everything for the good of men.

S. A. Beyond a doubt that is what it means; and I for one would decline. Literature is freedom, and the divine right of individuals. I have got into the way of making money, and like doing so. I like the applause also, and to know that hundreds of thousands have a warm corner for me in their hearts. Nevertheless I have the highest reverence for Literature, believing it to be the greatest thing

in the world. The one enemy of man is fanaticism, moral, religious, æsthetic, or mercantile; and Literature is the bulwark between man and his foe. Literature preserves man from sensuality, from spirituality, and from intellectuality, and keeps him intelligent.

U. A. Whatever do you mean? Literature represents the deepest abysses of sensuality, the utmost detachment of the spirit, and the fiercest intellectual pride.

S. A. I know; and I had the ambition at one time—it smoulders still—to be a really representative author; to write a gospel by John, and an anti-Christ by Nietzsche, the plays of Shakespeare and the novels of Flaubert, an amorous epic of Casanova and the autobiography of Madame Guyon. Goethe, I suppose, approaches the idea of a representative author; and Goethe makes for intelligence more than any writer I know. Intelligence, not righteousness, is the salt of the earth. Chaucer, Montaigne, Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Molière, Voltaire, Goethe, Burns, Emerson keep the world sweet, and make a true diapason in body-and-soul, uniting spirit, sense and mind in

one harmonious intelligence. Literature is freedom, and the law of freedom is this: "Thou shalt not require thy neighbour to vote as thou dost, to believe as thou dost, to think as thou dost, nor expect thy neighbour to be other than he is; for no two people are alike."

. XXVI. .

BUTTERFLIES, FROM "POUR LA COURONNE."

At sixteen years she knew no care;
 How could she, sweet and pure as light?
 And there pursued her everywhere
 Butterflies all white.

A lover looked. She dropped her eyes
 That glowed like pansies wet with dew;
 And lo, there came from out the skies
 Butterflies all blue.

Before she guessed, her heart was gone;
 The tale of love was swiftly told;

And all about her wheeled and shone
 Butterflies of gold.

Then he forsook her one sad morn;
 She wept and sobbed, "Oh love, come back."
 There only came to her forlorn
 Butterflies all black.

XXVII.

DESPAIR.

It was not a handsome day by any means. In the west of Sussex the Downs crawl to the sea in a very undignified style; in some places, indeed, they never reach it, but are hopelessly lost in salt marshes. Under a thin coating of snow, a mesh-work shroud, with a leaden sky above, the landscape was forbidding in the last degree. But it behoved me to go out. So I went up by Erringham Valley, where is a good road over the Downs.

"Here you are again, wandering about in your aimless fashion! What do you mean by it?"

"It is necessary to be cheerful. I find it above all things necessary to be cheerful. Understand I don't reject despair; it is probably the normal mood of a contemplative intelligence; but as I am still more than a mere spectator of life, my moods are therefore active. Passive despair is a form of cheerfulness; active despair is a first class explosive: passive despair is glycerine; active despair, nitro-glycerine. You can't blow yourself up all the time—can you?"

"But why not occupy your intelligence, as you call it, with some important study for your own benefit and that of mankind?"

• "That is the highway to despair—a path I have travelled, and will travel. But what I want you to understand is the necessity of being cheerful; the criminal negligence, the deep disgrace involved in not laying up a stock of cheerfulness whenever it can be begged, borrowed, or stolen."

"Come now!",

"Somewhat too vehement, I daresay, but my meaning is, that to indulge in cheerfulness is to get into form for despair—you see? That is to say, for hope; because despair, as you, being a

philosopher, must know, is the highest power of hope."

"What?"

"Despair is the highest power of hope. It is the only index and exponent of hope. And so I come out into the open air to lay up a stock of cheerfulness, wherewith to encounter, to equate despair, the root and dawn of all hope."

"But how do you do it—on a day like this?"

"The wind is raw, but it thunders through this hedge—do you hear? A muffled thunder of gongs, drums, cymbals, behind a thick curtain. And if you look at that hedge you will note that the spines of the hawthorn are alive, that they are murrey-coloured, have sap in them, are straining to the branches. You will also see that the leaf-buds are like jewels of coral, but warm and pregnant with green foliage. And I tell you that to observe these things, and keep them in my mind, and roll them over in my fancy like a sweet morsel, is to store away cheerfulness, to put by a purse of pleasure, and lay down a pipe of generous wine."

XXVIII.

A NEUROTIC CYCLIST.

LOOKING behind us we beheld a strange figure on a bicycle, which by a happy accident shot past instead of into us. It was the figure of a short, stout man, with long hair flying in the wind, his head thrown back and his legs sticking out on either side of the machine as if they had no connection either with him or it. The road was not nearly so steep as the lie of the land, because it was cut deeply into the flank of the Down, and a cyclist of ordinary skill could have spun through with ease; the spectators therefore concluded that this was a beginner attempting a descent for the first time. The cyclist did not reach the bottom. Trying apparently to turn up the bank where the acclivity was least, he upset his cycle and came down with a grunt on his side. "It's all right," he said, holding up the hind wheel and spinning the pedals. "The danger's over for the day."

• "Over for the day?"

"Yes," answered the cyclist, turning the pin and leaning against his cycle; "if I fall at all, I always fall three times, and that's the third time to-day."

"How's that?"

"Well, you see," rejoined the cyclist, lighting a cigarette, "I'm what's called neurotic."

"Oh!" We considered dubiously the cyclist's red cheeks and burly figure.

"There's no doubt about it," continued the cyclist. "I didn't believe it myself at first. I eat and drink as well as anybody, and attend to my affairs successfully; but every now and again, in the very midst of a good dinner, I have a sudden fit of absence of appetite, and in the press of business am overtaken by absence of mind. At last I went to a doctor, for I sometimes made odd and annoying mistakes that were neither good for my health nor my purse; and he told me I was nervous and advised me to get a bike. I laughed at him, but he said, looking at me curiously, 'You've no time to waste about it either; you get a bike. You should be able to ride in a fortnight; and, then every day or as often as the weather

and the roads permit, you should take a run of two hours.' I told him I would show him whether I was nervous or not, and went off and bought a bike at once—not this bike, but a good ordinary roadster. I didn't ride up to the doctor's door the first day—nor any day; and I've been riding for six months. I had to have a tutor; it was a full fortnight before I could go alone at all, and a month before I could dispense with assistance; and ever then I couldn't mount from behind in the ordinary way. I was so disgusted that I sold the roadster and bought a cob—this one, low-framed, you see. I simply sit down on it. Well, the doctor may have meant the bike to cure me; up to the present it has only made me conscious of my weakness. At first I fell off it every day. I didn't run against anything or upset—simply, after half an hour, I threw up my hands, flung out my legs and fell off. I couldn't explain it to anybody, I did it. Then, much to my surprise, six days went past without a mishap, but on the seventh down I came; and ever since there's not a week passes without a day of tumbles. It may be coming down a hill like this; it may be in a

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NOT EXCHANGEABLE AND

NOT SALABLE.

crowded street, or on a lonely level road; my thoughts may be far off, or they may be fixed on my cycle—no matter; the wheels glide away from me without warning, and I come plump on the ground. I've never sprained anything to speak of, but I'm black and blue from head to foot. And as I told you, if I fall once and have a mile or two to ride, I invariably repeat the accident twice over."

"But aren't you afraid?"

"Horribly," said the cyclist. "Just now I thought I was done for. I made sure I would collide with you and break my neck."

"Why the deuce didn't you put on your break?"

"That's just it," replied the cyclist as he mounted his machine. "If I weren't neurptic I *would* put on the break; but I am neurotic, you see, and I'm bound to go tumbling about the world on a rover cob. If you keep both feet on the pedals and both hands on the bar you can't fall off of yourself, certain sure; but there's a solution of continuity in the flow of my nervous energy as regards biking once a week, and I *take* my hands off the bar and my feet off the pedals, and there I am in the road."

That's the form of my neurosis in the matter of velocipedes. Good day!"

• "The man's a fool."

"Oh no, he's a philosopher."

XXIX:

THE MUSIC-HALL.

"THE Wise-innocent is no theatre-goer, preferring upon his rare nights out the senilities, puerilities and infantilities of the Music-hall."

• "Very well said! That is the attraction of the Music-hall: cheerful indifference to the claims of the intellect and the spirit, and a prompt, powerful and continuous appeal to the elementary and the subconscious, to what is permanent from first to second childhood."

XXX.

PORTRAITS AND ROMANCE.

Two Men.

1st Man. Do you visit the National Portrait Gallery sometimes?

2nd Man. When I lived in London I never could pass it without going in to look at the bust of Cromwell—the bust with the dint in the forehead. It is not a heroic bust, rather an understatement of the man; but you can stand face to face with it in its corner. There is the head of one about to issue a mandate that none may gainsay. It is worth looking at often.

1st Man. But are you not attracted by the modern portraits?

2nd Man. Not greatly. That of Lord Lawrence, bull-necked and lowering, by Mr. G. F. Watts, with fire, humour and honesty in its eyes, demands acceptance, so does the same artist's ethereal portrait of Gladstone at fifty-six, although the extreme candour of the eyes might be called childish rather than childlike.

1st Man. But Mr. Watts's literary men?

2nd Man. The best of these is, I think, the portrait of Matthew Arnold. The Carlyle is a debauch of ferocity. The pallid, almost expressionless profile of Browning may be rightly symbolic of the morbidly healthy all-inquiring intellect that never quite grasped the idea of intelligence—"I was ever a fighter"; but a suggestion of the joy of strength rather than of its apathy would have been more helpful.

1st Man. What do you mean by the apathy of strength?

2nd Man. Unintelligence. To be strong to the end, it is necessary to shut up many windows, to be deaf on either side of the head at will, to fetter the mind. Frederick the Great did so, and lived his life out. Cromwell could not, and died before his time. To know, to understand, and therefore to sympathize with, and love all men, even the worst, and yet to have to rule them, to have to punish them—the greatest men die of that. Caesar *was* dying of it. Diocletian and Charles V. had to give it up.

You cannot be
Both strong and free.

1st Man. Whose doggerel is that?

2nd Man. Mine.

1st Man. Well, I don't believe it. It's a Gospel of Cowardice.

2nd Man. A Gospel of Cowardice? That fails as all definitions do, outside exact science. Epigrams are the resource of weak minds, as meat extract is of weak stomachs.

1st Man. Possibly. They say vegetarians are great makers of epigrams.

2nd Man. I have not noticed that. But you have allowed the figure to run away with you. I should say that the mortification of the roast-beef stomach increases the vitality of the roast-beef mind.

1st Man. Go back to the Portrait Gallery. What about Mr. Watts's Tennyson?

2nd Man. Unhuman, and not divine; but a remarkable picture. It is liker a copy of a mask rather than a portrait. It is most typical of Mr. Watts's method; this outlandish countenance, this unearthly mask called a portrait of Tennyson, is overladen with meanings foreign to the subject. It is a personal utterance of the artist's—a lyric, like his Gladstone and his Rossetti. One has only

to glance up at the brilliant drama of Mr. Sargent's Coventry Patmore to perceive the sheer abyss between subjective and objective art.

1st Man. But I have heard you say that the dramatic presentation of character can never be vital without an alloy of the author's or artist's personality.

2nd Man. Yes, but it is the other way about in the case of Mr. Watts's lyrical portraits: however unconsciously, this artist is himself the subject. The people he paints are the alloy—little more, indeed, than the language of his song.

1st Man. What makes you think Mr. Watts's portrait of Matthew Arnold his best picture?

2nd Man. His best likeness, I meant; not by any means his best picture. Because there is very little of Mr. Watts in it. I should say that Mr. Watts, when he painted Matthew Arnold, did not know him; had little sympathy with his writings and only the slightest personal acquaintance. Therefore Matthew Arnold is, not varnished, gilded, sized and hidden by the artist's personality as Tennyson is—known, studied and absorbed, man and poetry. Mr. Watts's Matthew Arnold is a

cold, correct reproduction: it is just the wistful, confused, yet sedate and grave face of the man whose final utterance on poetry was "a Criticism of Life."

1st Man. Ah! you don't accept that utterance?

2nd Man. No. To criticise is to judge, to appraise, to forgive, and condemn—a necessary but thankless office. I should rather say that Literature is a Statement of the World (you have lured me into definition), and Poetry, being the inmost heart of literature, might be called an Interpretation of the World. There is no Criticism in Shakespeare; *Parolles* and *Timon* are stated and interpreted as gently as *Adam* and *Hamlet*: there is no Criticism in Ibsen; *Peer Gynt*, fool, liar and dastard, is stated, and interpreted as sympathetically as *Brand*, the heroic Titan. Burns's "Holy Willie's Prayer," commonly supposed to be a scathing satire, is not satire; it is drama, every line of it tingling with the humane feeling of the poet for the disgraceful creature he interprets. No; it is Religion that is a Criticism of Life, not Poetry. The existence of society depends—

1st Man. We can discuss that again. Stick to

"Poetry no criticism." The poet, I understand, must not condemn, must not blame."

2nd Man. That is the ultimate fate of the poet, I believe. A thoroughly awakened intelligence does not despise anybody or anything.

1st Man. It must be very annoying to be a thoroughly awakened intelligence.

2nd Man. Ah! you mean that flippantly. Now, it is unwise to be flippant. Speak your mind directly.

1st Man. Well then, I say that that is a part of a Gospel of Cowardice. He who has abdicated or lost the power to condemn deserves exile, deserves to be interdicted from fire and water.

2nd Man. But are not all Gospels either gospels of cowardice or gospels of ruffianism?—the latter being only an allotropic form of cowardice. I mean that gospels are for the weak; the strong need no gospel—except as a purchase, sometimes wisely used, upon the weak. When I say that a thoroughly awakened intelligence is not entitled to blame anybody or anything, I am not inviting you or anyone to become a thoroughly awakened intelligence. If the world *were* intelligent, I don't see how it could go on. Thus, it is absolutely

necessary for men and nations to fight, or to compete in some way, in order to find out which is the best man and the best nation; that, at any rate, is the history of the world hitherto. Now, the perfect intelligence cannot fight, cannot compete. Intelligence, fully awake, is doomed to understand, and can no more take part in the disputes of men than in the disputes of other male creatures.

1st Man. Then a perfect intelligence is a monster?

2nd Man. Monster, if you like, but in no opprobrious sense. There was once a handful of uncut diamonds that lay together in a shell among the bric-a-brac of a dilettante. By chance a ring, containing a many-faceted brilliant, fell into the shell. "What a monster!" cried out all the dusky, uncut gems.

1st Man. Then men are made intelligent by cutting?

2nd Man. By cutting, by grinding; and even if the process be one of utter, unending misery—for full intelligence is impossible—with every new facet there is a new rainbow.

1st Man. These seem to me very romantic notions.

2nd Man. And so they are. The world is best stated in terms of Romance. And here I should like to make a distinction. Romance and Romanticism are not by any means one. Romanticism bears somewhat the same relation to Romance that sentimentality bears to sentiment; only I do not dislike Romanticism so much as I do sentimentality. For example, I read the other day "Cyrano de Bergerac" with considerable pleasure, although it is the sheerest Romanticism.

1st Man. Romanticism is an unintelligent attempt at Romance. Is that your meaning?

2nd Man. I would not put it that way. Romanticism is a thing in the air; if it touches the world at all it is only as a tangent, whereas Romance is a diameter; the former is "Hernani"; the latter, "Hamlet."

1st Man. Romance, then, is your message to the world?

2nd Man. I have no message. I would state and interpret.

1st Man. But what would you say to me now,

or to anyone who wanted advice in the deafening clamour of the times?

And Man. If any person should have the misfortune to be so very much in need of advice as to apply to me, I should say, "Look at things for yourself"—a very antique saga. The foolish attempts of most men to see with the eyes of others, and the malign attempts of some to compel the rest to see as they do, are the causes of nearly all the ignoble misery in the world. He who says, "You must see things in this light," is the arch-traitor. He who says, "See for yourself," points out the way of deliverance.

XXXI.

HOPE.

Is hope only the subtlest form of cowardice?

XXXII.

MALIGNITY.

"ALL men and living beings are at all times and in all they do and dream both the agents and the victims of the malignity inherent in the nature of things. The moment a man understands himself, he becomes mad or commits suicide; and whenever one man understands another he tries to kill him."

"Surely not. To understand all is to forgive all."

"No, a million times! To understand all is to fight and slay. War, upon whatever excuse it be waged, is always the effect of a sudden insight into the true nature of the world and man. Life is something which should never have been; and so in fiery moments of intelligence we kill each other."

"If that be so, all living things are eminently courageous."

"Yes; just as they are all eminently foolish;

the courage and the folly hardly differing in degree."

"Still, merely to live is to be braye."

"But foolish."

"Nevertheless, we are all intelligent in the end, for we all die."

•XXXIII. •

LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY.

SAID the Critic to the Playwright, "Why do you study Philosophy so much? Surely the time is wasted for one whose work is Literature."

"I have been," said the Playwright, "a student of Philosophy since I could read, and shall be till I die; an intermittent student, sometimes submissive, sometimes recalcitrant, and I do not regard the time as wasted. Lately I have read little else, as it became imperative for me to search out the relation of Literature to Philosophy—that is to say, the relation of the Soul of Man to the Universe."

“And have you found that relation?”

“I have found, a relation which satisfies me, in the meantime. It is clear that these two worlds, Literature and Philosophy, are related and divided by a profound antithesis, and yet, exist within each other, like the intermixed spirits in the seventh gulf of the Inferno; but without the horror and torture of Hell. I perceive the identity of Spinoza's God, Hegel's Absolute, Fichte's Transcendental Ego, Schopenhauer's Will to Live, and Nietzsche's Will to Power. These all-embracing categories are titles which Man in his madness has conferred on Matter. It is the aim of Philosophy to integrate the appearances of Matter, to know and present them as a Universe or Unity. It is the aim of Literature, which keeps on absorbing and will ultimately include all Science, to know and present Matter as it is disintegrated into individuals, men and women, plants, animals, elements, suns, and systems. I hold by Literature, but the soul cannot live by Literature alone; wherefore I have recourse to the madness of Philosophy.”

“You cannot serve two Masters.”

"No, but I myself can be master in one work and acolyte in the other."

"You will still find it a divided duty."

"A divided duty is always a fruitful furrow in Art. But I shall find it what I make it."

"Save us! What a dust you do raise."

"Ah now, you want to be ironical!"

"Surely *you* have no objection to irony."

"On the contrary, irony is perhaps the last word of philosophy, the nearest approach to truth."

"What is truth?"

"Truth is the reconciliation of antagonisms. Irony integrates good and evil, the constituents of the universe. It is that Beyond-Good-and-Evil, which somebody clamoured for."

"Perhaps."

XXXIV.

THE POWER OF THE PEN.

THE power of the pen has been grossly exaggerated. Napoleon not Goethe made the modern world. Everybody knows the life of Napoleon

and its meaning, "the tools to him that can handle them." Every man goes Nap; and the women want to play too.

XXXV.

A ROOKERY.

THE road was from the sea inland, and then, for a mile, parallel with the shore, skirting the verge of the cliffless Downs. The wind from the south-east, sharp and vapoury, carried brine and haze over the southern counties; but its transparent burden was barely visible in the strong sunshine. A pallor, as of the thinnest coating of varnish, overspread the faint blue sky. The sun, an hour past noon, showed small and round, shorn of its beams by the dim haze, but hot and glittering, like an eye-hole opening into a vat of molten silver. Upon the horizon the vapour began to build itself up in tiers and courses; but the rest of the firmament was clear, save for the thin veil of mist and one solitary plume of white cloud that streamed from the top of heaven. A wooded park, like a

broad hem, edged the sunken Downs. Groves, avenues, and single trees resounded with the business of the rookery. The incessant, harsh, sibilant-raucous noise, rising and falling in gusts and squalls, swept the park from end to end. Sometimes a plangent voice soared out of the ground-tone in wild protest against the universe or a thieving neighbour; now a cloud of rooks would rise and adjourn from their tree-tops to a select space in the air; and there gyrate and discuss a knotty point with the unparliamentary liberty the problem required; or the low, deep-toned, self-satisfied caw of experienced and well-to-do rooks, who had settled themselves for the season weeks ago, would become distinctly audible in some lull of the stormy outcry, some reprieve of that friction which the clan-economy of a rookery entails.

XXXVI.

CRYING FOR THE MOON.

PEOPLE who cry for the moon should never be blamed. It is necessary always and at all times to

A ROSARY.

11

cry for the moon. There is a proverb in Scotland, "If ye bode (ask) for a silk goon ye'll get the sleeve o't," and if we persistently cry for the moon, we may be rewarded in time with a piece of green cheese.

XXXVII.

THE PRIME COST OF SOUTH DOWN MUTTON.

THERE is nothing in landscape more unsatisfactory to the æsthetic sense, more uncomfortable to the mood of the spectator than the seaward slope of the Downs. Where a bold escarpment fronts the Channel, the unnatural condition of these bereft hills is not perhaps so forcible in its pathetic appeal; but even then the nakedness of the land distresses. These low, rolling hills should be covered with forest as they were originally. It is nature's plan. The mid-Surrey Hills, or the Chilterns between Wendover and Prince's Risborough, in conformation and distribution the very images of the South Downs, are perfect in the richness, the secrecy and repose of their wooded,

their heavily draped contours. But this unfortunate range by the sea is doomed to thrust out along the shore its naked slopes and mounds like the limbs and shoulders of plucked fowls. The expense of a luxury is not calculable in currency alone; the beauty of the South Downs is the prime cost of Southdown mutton.

XXXVIII.

CRITIC AND AUTHOR.

Critic. Author.

C. Why do you reply to criticism? It has a very ill effect. Everybody knows what lies behind it.

A. What lies behind it?

C. All that is bad in art. I once heard an embittered painter express it nakedly at that naked hour before the dawn when evil stirs in the dreams of innocent sleepers, and rises foul and hateful to the surface of the consciousness of many

who are awake. He said, "No artist, that is, no person who prostitutes his emotions and passions for pay cares a tinker's damn for what is written, said, or thought about his pictures, his books, his acting, or his music, as long as he makes money. It is when his income dwindles that he begins to reply to criticism. That," he added, "is my experience, and I have observed it in others."

A. The one-sided, harsh, economic truth. It is my experience also. But I go behind that. I recognize a transcendental reason in an author's replying to his critics. Thus——

C. One moment. I also transcend. The critic is related to the artist—author, painter, or whatever he be—as judge only. Thus, in reading a new book, I regard the writer as upon his trial for a capital offence. There are in the world already the poems of Homer, the Book of Job, Dante's "Divine Comedy," the plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Balzac, Schopenhauer's "World as Will and Presentation." These and others are the silent counsel, the silent witnesses, and the silent jury; upon their advocacy, upon their testimony, and in compliance with their verdict I adjudicate. The

effect of my sentence on the author's economies is no concern of mine; neither is it any concern of mine whether my sentence meets with public approval or not. My position is one of neutrality; my function to execute absolute justice.

A. That, I believe, is the definition of the ideal critic—who, of course, cannot exist: to be neutral is to be self-ostracised, to execute absolute justice would be to commit suicide. No criticism has any effect or any value, that is to say, lives, however temporarily, in the minds of men, unless it takes a side: it must appreciate or depreciate.

C. I think you exaggerate, in this matter of praise and blame. English Literary Criticism is a little older and a little wiser than it was in its irresponsible childhood. You must remember that English Literary Criticism is still only a youth. From Sidney to Dryden I should call the gestation of English Literary Criticism. With Dryden it is born. It reaches its teens perhaps in Matthew Arnold; and is not yet out of them. Indeed, I feel certain that Literary Criticism will not become adult until Science has adopted it under the style of a Criticism of Literature; and then no one who

is not a master in Biology will have any status as a Critic of Letters.

A. I agree, although I fear we talk of a distant time; of a time when no one shall be entitled to a cure of souls who is not a master in physiology and a practised pathologist. But you were saying——?

C. That Literary Criticism, although not yet become a Criticism of Literature, is a little wiser than it was. It is true there are individuals, and even coteries, I am told, quite capable of swearing hard for or against an author. Indeed, I am acquainted with a harmless brother craftsman whose great desire is to kill a poet. He has attempted the lives of several in dailies, weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies, but as yet he carries no scalp for three reasons that cancel each other like the terms of certain divorce pleas. Firstly, the public, although still beautifully willing to lend an ear to the most flattering applause, has come to suspect violent depreciation. Secondly, my harmless brother craftsman attacked reputations which had no existence except in his imagination—namely, the supposed reputations of writers unknown to the public. Thirdly, the writers attacked, and the two or three

hundred people who regularly bought their books, were of independent minds, and quite indifferent to this or any other critic's opinion.

A. Who is this harmless person?

C. I mustn't tell you his name. He is a veteran of much literature, occupied and concerned with nothing else; the old style of critic, unsophisticated and militant. It is that imaginary poeticide of Macaulay's, of course, which he wishes to rival. He is unable to understand that a battalion of Macaulays would fail to kill one single poet. If Montgomery died on account of Macaulay's article, it was not because Macaulay said he was no poet, but because in his heart he knew it was true. This critic, however, is, I believe, an exceptional survival. Literary criticism now tries more or less consistently to say what a thing is, and only in the second and third places to say that the thing is good or bad, liked or disliked.

A. I agree with you, and in this I approach the ground of my transcendental relation to criticism.

C. Let's have it.

A. I will. In the struggle for existence all men are related to each other as destroyers or protectors.

In no order is this relation closer or more direct than in the world of letters between the critic and the author, notwithstanding the fact that authors of wide and assured popularity are in a large measure independent of literary criticism. They were not so at the start. Authors, on the other hand, with small or fluctuating constituencies are very dependent on written criticism for encouragement, no matter how strong they may be in character or genius. Writers of ability, for want of appreciation, have been thwarted, turned aside from their true development, and sometimes silenced. Carlyle himself, unsurpassed in strength among men of letters, seriously considered the advisability, midway in his career, of laying down his pen altogether. The struggle for existence in the literary world resolves itself, therefore, into a fight for recognition. The author must live in the minds of others or not at all; and if he finds that he is not alive in the minds of his critics, and that their criticism will not help to extend his self-consciousness into the self-consciousness of the world, he will feel constantly impelled to reply to them in the hope of entering into their mental ex-

istence. That is the transcendental and therefore most human relation I perceive between the author and the critic; and for my part, the conditions of literature being what they are, I think the author is amply entitled to his reply:

C. You are talking the sheerest Hegelism. This is Hegel's doctrine of the fight of recognition which produced the status of master and slave—the first germ, I should say, of Nietzsche's antinomy in morality. 'That is what you are aiming at! To have the critic the slave of the author!

A. No, sir. I would have the critic and the author loyal enemies or loyal friends.

C. I suppose that is the only relation in all spheres while the world lasts. Those who are, not for one are against one.

XXXIX.

THE WASTREL.

• An eyesore to the tourist on the shoulder of the
knock

Above the green-fledged larches where the
squirrel keeps its house,

The pale dissenting chapel, like a pharos on a
rock,

With strong, pathetic preaching that the very
dead might rouse,

Was lighted for an hour and twenty minutes by
the clock,

While the cushions moaned and muttered deep
among the rustling boughs.

• With Conybeare-and-Howson laid on thick for
local hue,

And Meyer's and Lange's comments to elucid-
ate the text,

• The minister exhibited a panoramic view

Of the story of the wastrel and the father that
he vexed:
Of little but his Bible and his creed the preacher
knew,
And dogma like a razor his emotions had un-
sexed.

Then came the modern instance, and the congrega-
tion stirred,
And scrutinized the pew in which the preacher's
family sat.
"I knew it," thought each member, "at the very
opening word!"
And felt as perspicacious as a dog that smells
a rat:

The preacher's wife and daughters seized their
Bibles when they heard;
And his son, as red as poppies, stooped and
glanced at this and that.

"But recently," the preacher said, "to London
town there went
A youth from our vicinity against his father's
wish;

A ROSARY.

101

To make a fortune—honestly, if possible—he
• meant,

Forgetting quite how God examines both sides
of the dish :

Unless a holy life exhale to Heaven a savoury
scent,

We know how very profitless the loaves are and
the fish." . . .

The wife and daughters shrivel up and shut their
eyes and cry,

As the preacher drives the lancet home and lays
their heart-strings bare ;

But the wastrel, cool and clammy, feels a wind of
• fate go by,

And "hears his pulses clank above monition,
praise and prayer—

"Oho, for London Town again, where folk in
peace can die,

And the thunder-and-lightning devil of a train
that takes me there!"

XL.

KNIGHT-ERRANTRY.

"THE need of knight-errantry was never greater in the world than now," said the ingenious gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha, to his squire, Sancho Panza, as they lunched together on bread and cheese, in a coombe of the Downs, while Rozinante and Dapple, trespassing at their will, feasted on the young corn.

- "Persuade me of that if you can," said Sancho Panza. "In this country of England, whither the enchanters that persecute your worship have carried us nolly-wolly" —

"You must mean *volens volens*, or perhaps willy-nilly, Sancho," interrupted Don Quixote.

"Master of Mine," quoth Sancho, "how often have I besought your worship to let me go my own way? What does it matter about the words, when the meaning is as plain as the nose on your worship's sorrowful countenance? God help me with my own! Give me the ass that carries me

rather than the horse that throws me; for he who goes softly goes safely; and who goes safely goes far. Too much is worse than nothing, and little sticks kindle a great fire; and though you can never fill a greedy eye, yet one day the glutton gets enough, and that is when the gravedigger feeds him with a spade."

"Devil of a man!" cried Don Quixote, "will you never be done stringing proverbs as germane to the matter as a rosary to a swine's snout?"

"Sir, if you had not interrupted me," replied Sancho, "I would have strung no proverbs; but come out plump with the thing I want to say; for one beats the bush and another catches the birds; and the thief will tell you if I am an honest man."

"Enough said, Sancho. What is this thing that you want to come out with?"

"In this country of England," replied Sancho, "I have heard a word which is likely to put the nose of Knight-errantry out of joint once for all."

"And what word is that, Sancho?"

"Science, your worship," quoth Sancho.

"Science put the nose of Knight-errantry out of joint!" cried Don Quixote. "Sooner shall the

incomparable beauty of the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso become as dust and ashes in the memory of this her captive knight! Neither science nor nescience shall ever be able to dislocate the meanest joint or member of that most glorious calling, whose inenarrable renown, inadequately celebrated even in the most powerful speech of men, extends and radiates to the end of the earth. But tell me, Son Sancho, what is this that you have heard of Science?"

"Why, sir," replied Sancho, "I have heard of a new horse called Sociology out of Biology by Science-in-General, which they say can take a heavy handicap and outstrip Rozinante any day; and on this horse, it was told me very seriously, all governors of islands, countries, empires and continents are riding forth even now to the defence of the weak against the strong and the righting of widows and orphans, and the overthrow of robbers and tyrants."

"Whoever says," answered Don Quixote in high wrath, "that Rozinante is not the noblest of all chargers, past, present, and to come, the soundest in wind and limb, of unparalleled strength and

Tom Fool could have told them they would, that things were pretty well where they had been before; only instead of a Theocracy, the soul of the state was now a Philosophocracy."

"Heaven be my aid," said Sancho, "Master of my soul, what a word is that! Philoso—what?"

"Philosophocracy, Sancho, or perhaps I should say, Metaphysicracy," replied Don Quixote.

"Have a care, Signor Don Quixote," rejoined Sancho anxiously. "These are not words to be said lightly: a merciful man should have mercy on his own jaws, especially if, like your worship's, the slings of the shepherds and herdsmen have made an inroad in them already."

"Brother Sancho," said Don Quixote, "meddle with what concerns you, and attend to my discourse in silence. How often must I drill it into these gross ears of yours that the first virtue of squires is silence? Reply not! Swallow down that mouthful of proverbs, dull ruminant, and listen to me. I say with the advent of William of Orange the soul of England became definitely a Philosophocracy. Instead of an Absolute Monarchy and the Divine Right of Kings, there was established at

the dictation, or rather, by the inspiration, of the two famous sages, Hobbes and Locke, a Limited Monarchy and the British Constitution. But wicked enchanters, flinging their spells into the spongy air from the neighbouring country of Gaul during a time of turbulence and upheaval, unloosed a baleful spirit of inquiry which kept nagging and nibbling at the Philosophocracy, and which has now, finally, by one of the subtlest and most astounding pieces of sorcery recorded in history, transmogrified the said Philosophocracy into a Plutocracy, supposed—and that is the miracle—by the majority of the inhabitants of this deluded island to be, not a Plutocracy, but to all intents and purposes a Democracy. Now, Sancho, it is upon the very back of this new horse, Sociology, that the Plutocracy rides, the backbone of Sociology being that Things-Must-Be-as-They-Are, its forelegs the Struggle-for-Existence, and its hind-legs the Survival-of-the-Fittest. The meaning of this is that men in power and thinkers and artists have renounced all endeavour towards the realization of what we sometimes call the Kingdom of Heaven, and have consciously re-

lapsed into a state of savagery, in which every man's hand is against his neighbour's, and nation armed against nation. The warfare is one of stratagems, of starving, of chicanery, of corners, of syndicates, of trusts, companies, and combinations. Front-de-bœuf no longer shuts up unwary travellers in his dungeon till they have paid an exorbitant ransom; but the capitalist for his private profit regulates the price of the necessities of life; and the production of food and clothing, of coal and iron, has passed from the control of the need of the consumer into the control of the greed of the shareholder. A war similar to this civil one of commerce, with its indirect ruin, which the individual carries on, international strife is also engaged in on an extended scale, employing, besides, the most terrible and direct means of slaughter and destruction ever invented on the earth. There are twenty millions of men in Europe trained to arms, and a conflict in which they shall all be involved is generally expected. Bethink you, Sancho, what it behoves us to do. Of all men, I, Don Quixote, am the most famous written of since the beginning of the Christian era. "Not"

Achilles, not Sigurd, not Orlando, not Hamlet, not Faust, but I, Don Quixote de la Mancha, am he whose name the world would cherish should all others be forgotten. Something sublime is expected of me at this crisis in the affairs of men; and therefore it is, Sancho, that we have been carried hither to this country of England, not, as you surmised, by wicked sorcerers, but by the sage and noble-minded enchanter who superintends the business of my life; because in this country, although the soul of its Limited Monarchy is now a Plutocracy, there remains more liberty of thought, speech, and action than in any other, be it Empire, Kingdom, or Republic. More liberty, I say, and a more liberal mood in men. Here, therefore, is the field for that greatest of all adventures reserved for me alone, and which shall result in the establishment of a new order of knight-errantry, whose glory and renown shall as far exceed the old as the sun exceeds the farthing splendour of a tallow-dip. Following the counsel of the most noble, the most reverend, and the most enlightened of all sages, the famous Muscovite Count, I shall enforce all comers, on pain of

instant death at my hands, to accept the doctrine of the Non-Resistance of Evil. As all men know, it is the dealer of the second blow who causes the fight. If there be an end of retaliation, there is a beginning of endless peace. I shall go forth, Sancho, into the highways and the towns, and compel the men of England to Non-Resistance. The money-lender shall burn his bills; the 'bull' and the 'bear' shall lie down in peace together; the company promoter shall spend his substance in the endowment of orphans and the portioning of widows; and the magistrate shall bestow upon the thief double what he stole, and offer his own neck to the knife of the murderer. I'll have it so, Sancho. All or nothing is the motto. These things I shall compel men to do at the point of my lance."

"May I ask your worship a question?" said Sancho demurely.

"Ask, Sancho," said Don Quixote.

"What kind of lesson in Non-Resistance of Evil will your worship give men by attacking it with lance in rest?"

"You know naught of the matter, Sancho,"

replied Don Quixote. "Evil must be attacked and overthrown in order that it may cease to be resisted. Merely to speak against it is to resist it. You never can have Non-Resistance of Evil, Sancho, until there is none to resist."

"Truly," thought Sancho, "this master of mine is madder than ever, for he contradicts himself at every turn." But he said aloud, "Signor Don Quixote, all that your worship says may very well be; for a strong man never wanted a weapon; and every fox must pay his own brush. The Emperor of Germany, as the French say, is King of Kings; the King of Spain, King of men; the King of France, King of asses, and the King of England, King of devils; and he that is embarked with the devil must make the passage along with him."

"For once, Sancho," said Don Quixote, as he mounted Rozinante and led the way over the Downs, "your proverb hits the mark."

XLI.

THE LOOSE WAVE.

ON the other side of the road, between the post office and an old-fashioned inn, a wide gap, where a tenement had been burned to the ground, opened on the English Channel two furlongs away. The sloping sea—from any position above it the sea seems to lean up a little against the sky—that portion of the sloping sea, partitioned off by the gables of the post office and the inn, had been my stage and camera obscura in the winter of '96-97. Whatever I desired to behold appeared on that gray-green plane. By day or night the curtain was never lowered, the lid never shut. Gray-green by a preference of its own it seemed to be, but all manner of lights were turned on from daybreak to dusk, from dusk to daybreak, by the dawn, the moon, and the night. Storm danced over it; the foam, like footlights, flared along the beach. No gauze and floundering men to make the surge here, nor artifice of sound required at all; the wind

slashed and dug and flung the sea about, and the loose wave drew the shrieking shingle down.

"Ha! 'The loose wave drew the shrieking shingle down'—a misquotation from Tennyson."

"No, Tennyson has 'the screaming wave,' but I have never seen or heard it so. When a long roller breaks on the beach it becomes in a measure detached from the rest of the sea; actually may be seen to pause, sustained behind for a moment by the next roller, before it flows back and under with a soft rippling sound of its own on the sand, and with the same sound of its own, if you could hear it, on the shingle: the noise the rebellious pebbles make resenting the murmur and embrace of the wave is the scream or the shriek one hears. 'The loose wave drew the shrieking shingle down.'"

XLII.

WOMEN AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS.

Mrs. Scrambler. Maud Emblem.

Mrs. S. Oh, my dear, since we last met my studies have advanced prodigiously. I assure you

I never read "The Family Herald Supplement" now, and I'm not even tempted to do so. I am a representative woman—fully representative. I bought "The Times" edition of the "Encyclopedia Britannica," and I revel in it. At first I couldn't get on at all. I tried Philina's plan in "Wilhelm Meister": you remember, with the wild boy and the sand-glass;—but, by the way, a very overrated book, my dear. There are fine things in Goethe, that we all admit; but "Meister," "Wahrheit und Dichtung," and the conversations and journeys!—my dear Maud, there is a man as busy as he can be making a fetish of himself; and that glorious ass, the world, falls down and worships. Goethe is the fetish and the medicine-man in one, as Matthew Arnold pointed out before me—

"He took the suffering human race,

He read each wound, each weakness clear;

And struck his finger on the place,"

and kissed the wound to make it well—or ought to have tried. But I don't really care for Matthew Arnold either. He was fetish and medicine-man in his own way, too; and Nietzsche and Carlyle

and Ruskin and Emerson—fetish, fetish, fetish!—self-fetishism all-through! They got on the nerves of the world, however, and are there still, some of them. But we're going to change all that. It is the day of cheap encyclopedias; learning is dumped down at our doors, carriage paid within the London postal district; and the past is wiped out once for all. Elbow-room, my dear Maud, elbow-room; that's what you need. The necessary literary lumber of the ages is condensed into a score of morocco-bound volumes in a revolving book-case, and there you are ready to begin the world over again for yourself. This is the greatest epoch in the history of the race. The groves are cut down for match boxes; the graven images ground into insect powder, and the iconoclast is WOMAN. Bravo us!

M. E. There is much in what you say, Mrs. Scambler. Women are perhaps in a better position to overthrow the tyranny of the past than men. But will we? Take such vested interests as the Ecclesiastical and Educational establishments, which are the endowment of the tyranny of the past. What are we doing with regard to them?

Women are still the mainstay of the first, and we are fighting tooth and nail for a share in the latter. On the day a woman became a wrangler the Revolution was set back two hundred years.

Mrs. S. That's because we are fools, my dear. Fancy! They have in America the Rev. Jemima Smith! We are on a wrong tack in the meantime. Instead of developing woman, the supposed emancipated are, high and low, perversely imitating man—in dress, in education, in manners, and customs. They want to wear trousers; they have clubs, congresses; they are stockbrokers; they address meetings; they are journalists, reviewers; would-be manikins—that's all! How unwittingly they flatter the vanity of men! They—we, have no originality; we are merely imitative—in the meantime. But inexpensive dictionaries and encyclopedias, my dear, will drag the Revolution back again by the hair of the head. Every woman will sit in her study with her little pots of Bœvril, and defy these minotaurs of universities. We will leave men their literature, their music, painting, sculpture, and we will evolve new arts of our own. Think of it, my dear—A NEW ART! I have one

at the back of my head; an art that shall develop entirely out of womanhood; which men will imitate, but never do anything original in. Oh, we shall get our own again when we cease trying to be men! Echo the men? It's not good enough for me, Maud! A NEW ART! I will have it! Somebody said recently, "while the changed order has moved farther and farther away from the Old Ideal, the New Ideal still hides behind the horizon." With us, Maud! I am sure it is with us! The Ideals of men have all been tried and found wanting; the New Ideal, still in the nest of Time, will be hatched by the complete emancipation of woman.

M. E. There are those who think that Ideals have had their day, Mrs. Scambler, and expect that the New Order will draw its inspiration from Ideas.

Mrs. S. Ideas instead of Ideals? Yes!

XLIII.

•SIN.

“WHO is that standing by the wayside in forlorn attire, but with a cheerful countenance, whom most of the passers-by shrug the shoulder at?”

“That is one who committed a sin.”

“A sin! Only one sin?”

“Only one sin.”

“But surely every one commits one sin at least?”

“No, a sinner is a Phoenix for rarity, because there is only one sin that can be committed.”

“What is this one sin?”

“He whom you see standing there, forlorn but cheerful, appealed to intelligence.”

“In Heaven’s name and the Devil’s! Appealed to intelligence!”

“He wished to exact intelligence from human beings.”

• “A toll which no one who knows the race would dream of imposing! Why could he not be content to appeal to some prejudice, moral, religious, philo-

sophic, or æsthetic? Why could he not be content with the appeal to the bosoms and businesses of men?"

"Why indeed?"

"But upon what did he appeal to intelligence? Some new gospel or theory of the Universe?"

"No; he has no message, no evangel."

"Is he a satirist, then?"

"No!"

"What on earth is he?"

"A sinner, as I said."

"Yes, but what is the exact nature of his sin, of his appeal to intelligence?"

"He states the world."

"States the world! As it is?"

"That is part of his aim."

"What intolerable malice! Why don't they kill him off-hand?"

"Some have tried repeatedly, and will again. But he is not entirely without friends. Besides, he will take a lot of killing, that, one."

A ROSARY.

XLIV.

VILLANELLE.

THE power we would amass
Escapes our faint desire;
The hours like coursers pass.

THE world's a magic glass,
Wherein while we admire
The power we would amass,

And trim our hopes, alas,
Wild-eyed and shod with fire
The hours like coursers pass!

Though arms of beaten brass
Match not the soul's attire
Of power we should amass,

With Pegasus at grass,
We saunter in the mire,
While the hours like coursers pass.

Leave mead and hippocras:
 With Hippocrene aspire
 To power we must amass.

Relinquish creed and class;
 Pursue through brake and briar
 The power we shall amass,
 On the swift hours as they pass!

XLV.

PLAYS AND PLAYWRIGHTS.

Actor-Manager. Playwright.

P. Well, I've read this play.

A. And what do you think of it?

P. I can't recommend you to produce it.

A. Yes; but what do you think of it?

P. Does that matter? What do *you* think of it?

A. I think without exception it is the best play
 I ever read—as literature, as drama, and as play.

P. But?

A. (*Shrugs his shoulders.*)

P. Let us quit the humbug of the profession and be honest. You think this play, which I have just read and condemned, the best in the world as literature, as drama, and as play?

A. The humbug of the profession is not nearly so rank as the ordinary humbug of society.

P. Granted; it is the difference between nut oil and tallow. But what I want is friction and the smell of fire.

A. As much as you like.

P. This play, then, is in every respect the best you have read?

A. That is my opinion.

P. Well! (*Shrugs his shoulders.*)

A. You pulled me up for shrugging a moment ago. Let us have friction and the smell of fire.

P. Then, sir, I think that you are either a pitiful coward or an ineffable fool if you hesitate to produce the best play in the world.

A. Cowardice and folly are the uncoiled names of prudence and audacity.

P. I prefer that; you are either too prudent or too audacious.

A. I am afraid friction and the smell of fire, are

not congenial to you; you run off the rails at once. You will find a little lubricant go a long way.

P. True, manners are the complexion of society; and a touch of rouge is indispensable.

A. In the sunlight as well as in the limelight.

P. But we're still off the rails. Tell me why you hesitate to produce a play you think so highly of?

A. Because it is so entirely new in mood and idea.

P. Ah, you love the old forms and traditions—Brown, Smith, Robinson, and the ever-popular Shakespeare. I am glad you are so true an artist: all art is conservative.

A. At any rate I feel that there is a working good-and-evil spirit of change in this play which makes me pause.

P. You exaggerate. There is nothing really extraordinary in the play; to depart from convention is not necessarily to create a new convention. No, sir; you are misled by a specious red-herring novelty which kills the old scent; and you are begging the question when you declare that this is the best script you ever read as literature, as drama,

and as play. A play which contains a "working good-and-evil spirit of change" may be as literature, as drama, and as play the best in the world—although I think it ludicrous to describe this one in such terms; but what about the one thing needful? Is this play *an actual evening's entertainment*? *Is there any money in it*? You know very well, there is not. The author of this play has none of the true artistic spirit that recognizes without a chemical test on which side its bread is buttered. Further, there is no part for you in it. You could of course play the hero—you can play anything; but it is clear that this play was not written for you.

A. On the contrary the author intended it for an evening's entertainment, and wrote it for me upon my commission. "

P. Oh! And do you find yourself in it?

A. In some respects I do—a gesture, a tone, a thought; because the mistake the author made was this; instead of writing a part for me, consciously or unconsciously he tried to write me into the part.

P. But *I* always do that! Come, come, my dear sir! The plays I have written for you, were they successful?

A. They were highly remunerative, as you know.

P. They were; and just because I endeavoured in each of them to put you into the play.

A. Curious. Your plays recommended themselves to me mainly because my parts were so utterly unlike myself, or rather I should say, so utterly unlike anything human or inhuman, that I could supply all the flesh and blood, and mould them exactly to my own fancy.

P. No doubt, no doubt; there is much in what you say. At least I can understand that is how the parts would seem to you. That is exactly how Hamlet must have seemed to Burbage. By the way, do you know the tragedy of Shakespeare's life?

A. Well, I have always understood that every artist's life is necessarily a tragedy.

P. Yes, of course, in a general sense. I myself am often very miserable. But I mean the tragic side of Shakespeare's theatrical life. It is very interesting—the details of it.

A. The details?

P. Yes. You know Shakespeare was a very weak and a very vain man.

A. Was he?

P. No doubt of it.

A. Well, if it gives you any pleasure to think so—

P. Honestly, it does; it is very consoling. When one hears this man praised as the supreme intelligence, it gratifies one's *amour propre* to remember that he was weak and vain. Have you ever heard of a writer, at one time of some note in academic circles, called Walter Pater?

A. What has he to do with it?

P. Why, this; he points out somewhere that expression in literature—he means the literature of the whole world—achieves its highest in Claudio's speech in "Measure for Measure." You remember: "Ay, but to die, and go we know not where . . . in thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice," etc. Now that is a poetical expression of utter collapse; and if this terrified outcry is the high-water mark of Shakespeare, then Shakespeare must have been weak.

A. It does not follow. Strength is not loquacious either in pleasure or in pain. As soon as you have expression you have an element of weakness; and

Shakespeare, you must remember, was by way of being a dramatist, and *had* to express; so when he depicts a weak man overwhelmed with terror he makes him say something.

P. True, but there is no courageous speech in Shakespeare, not of Othello, nor of Coriolanus, that equals in effect Claudio's terrified outcry; and I conclude that what Shakespeare expresses best must have been most "liable and congruent" to his own nature.

A. Again I don't agree. You forget that poetry, like every other art, is an entity in itself, has a nature of its own. Setting aside music, poetry is the most expressive of the arts; therefore it seized upon the opportunity of Claudio's speech to have this greatest terror of man's, the dread of death, uttered once for all—if Pater is right, which I doubt.

P. Very well, then, poetry, after music, being the most expressive of all the arts, and expression being, as you have said, necessarily compounded of weakness, it follows that poetry must seize upon weak men as the instruments of its will; and Shakespeare, as the greatest poet, was inevitably the weakest man.

A. One 'of the weakest, doubtless; and one of the strongest: Shakespeare was humanity. •

P. I don't care how you put it so long as you grant he was weak. What I want to say is this—that the true protagonist, the great hero of the English drama, was Burbage, not Shakespeare. Burbage was a splendid, powerful personality and it was only when Shakespeare was writing not a part for Burbage, but Burbage into the part that he succeeded to the height. Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Lear, Antony—these are, all of them the magnificent, many-sided Burbage, plus Shakespeare's imagination and gift of expression. The two most successful writers 'for the stage' are Molière and Shakespeare: the former because he wrote himself into his parts; the latter, because he had a permanent model in Burbage. Whenever Shakespeare strays too far from his model—in Posthumus, for example, or Leontes—he produces something inferior. That was the tragedy of Shakespeare's theatrical life: he knew his incapacity to create a great part unless he were imbued with the idea of Burbage; he loved and hated his model, and wrote the sonnets to him.

A. Ah, the Sonnets! There is no possible, or impossible theory about Shakespeare that can't be proved from the Sonnets. By why all his?

P. Well, if the author of this play endeavoured to write you into the leading part, he did as I do, and as Shakespeare would have done. The fact that he has failed is a sign of his incapacity. Who is it?

A. (*Mentions a name.*)

P. Oh-h-h! I know where we are now! My dear fellow, you can't possibly produce his play, even if it were as good as you think.

A. Why?

P. Because—it would never do. Don't you know the history of his connection with the stage?

A. No. Is there any history?

P. Not in the significant sense of your inflection. What I mean is that seven years ago he adapted a play which was produced successfully, and that since then he has prepared eight plays, none of which have been produced.

A. And what do you gather from that?

P. I gather that the man's reputation as a play-

wright is destroyed. Play after play is announced and nothing comes of it. The result is the managers, critics, playgoers, all shake their heads and the author gets a bad name. "

A. Therefore I should help hang him. "Him that's down, down with him."

P. There's a lot of truth in proverbs.

A. There is; but the right use of proverbs is not understood. People say, "Give a dog a bad name and hang him," shrug their shoulders, and allow what they consider the inevitable to happen. Now that is very stupid; we are not here to abide but to correct the evil of the world. With regard to the author of this play, which you dislike, I know for certain that four out of the eight plays you spoke of were approved by those they were written for, and their production arranged; and that two of them, one in England and one in America, were put into rehearsal.

P. And why weren't they produced?

A. You know the conditions of the stage as well as I, and the thousand and one mischances that may occur.

P. And the author's not to blame!

A. There is no one to blame, as the author himself would probably tell you—unless it be the natural philosophers who have not yet coded the laws of chance.

P. I suppose he doesn't care.

A. The author? On the contrary! Have you no imagination at all? Here is a man with some fame in the world and a brilliant opening as a playwright. Play after play by him is announced: some are considered unsatisfactory; but four, as I said, are approved of, their production promised, the characters cast, the parts distributed, and in three cases rehearsals begun. One or other of these plays would have succeeded—perhaps all four; and the author would have been able to go on, if not with greater goodwill, at least with greater confidence and greater power. Not care! The marvel to me is that he hasn't died of chagrin. It is a labour and a torment of Sisyphus and Tantalus combined.

P. Why doesn't he leave it alone then?

A. The theatre came to him in the first instance, and repeatedly since. The theatre is pledged to him.

B. But as a matter of business?

A. He who counts only the cost never does anything. I'll produce his play.

P. My dear sir, you mustn't—you mustn't do it. The man has a bad reputation: as a matter of fact he is not orthodox. I was present in a company where he was some little time ago. That about Sophocles came up—"who saw life steadily and saw it whole." Says he, "That has very little meaning for me. Christianity came after Sophocles; and Darwin has come since Shakespeare." Some one said "Nietzsche." "Oh," says he, "Nietzsche is the most divulsive force in the history of letters. But there is no need why we should concern ourselves about his philosophy, or about Mr. Herbert Spencer's. A new Philosophy—it will not be called an Evolutionary Philosophy when it arrives, and will be neither aphoristic nor synthetic—is an attempt to forestall posterity. The new mood and matter must pass through the fire of poetry before it can become a system; and that will take hundreds of years, precisely as Christianity had to pass through the fire of religion before it could be stated as a pessimistic philosophy by Schopenhauer." "Not

only is this man heterodox, but I am very much afraid he might be called an independent thinker.

A. How very terrible! I'll produce his play. You don't understand him at all. He is an artist as well as a thinker, and can appeal to the emotion of the world as well as to the intelligence of the few. I'll produce his play.

P. It will be a failure.

A. I am very glad to have your opinion; but you and I are the last people in the world to know whether a play will succeed or not. Two out of every three plays produced in London fail; and it is you and I and our compeers who make the selections. The managements and their advisers have no right to an opinion on the *fortunes* of a play: production is the only test.

XLVI.

A WONDER OF THE WORLD.

THE old timber bridge at Old Shoreham is the most spider-legged, fragile, and merely temporary

structure conceivable. Erected more than a century ago, doubtless as a do-no-better to be superseded in a year or two when the times improved, it still spans the Adur, a passable, tolled, authentic bridge. A capful of wind, the buffet of a wave, would seem at any time quite enough to scatter its spindle-shanks in the river. But its levity is its safeguard, and it will probably continue to straddle across from Old Shoreham Church to the Pad Inn for another century, one of the wonders of the world in its own quarter. You cross it of a morning on the road to Cissbury Ring with a certain degree of pleasure. It is not uncomely; it is also venerable, and yet nimble looking, like a hale old soldier in perennial splints: it is quaint, airy, fascinating—a primitive walking-skeleton of a bridge, the root idea of it being, in all likelihood, a footpath on stilts.

XLVII.

THE MAP OF ENGLAND.

IF you look at a map you feel certain that England will hold together as long as its counties are so securely dovetailed: but, on the other hand, when you look at the rectangular divisions of Australia and the United States you wonder how long it is to last—this juggling trick whereby these cubes are held together in the air. Take a look at a coloured map, and see how well mortised into each other the English counties are: Middlesex clamped into Hertfordshire; Hertfordshire rooted in Middlesex; Bedfordshire shaped into five counties as if it had been poured into a mould; Warwick riveted into Worcester; Derby held between Stafford and Leicester as in a vice, and York with a holdfast sunk deep into Lancashire, and a great spike thrust in between Westmoreland and Durham. The country was put together to last: when Fate takes a job of this kind in hand there is no scamped work.

XLVIII.

CUCKOO FAIR.

HEATHFIELD, which the good people of the district call Hefful, lies dispersedly in the hollows and on the crests of the East Sussex Hills, and is rather a district than a town. The road from Heathfield station to Cade Street, the hamlet where Cuckoo Fair is held, crossed the roof of the world in that neighbourhood. Through the trees that skirted the way the landscape stretched northward visible for miles. In the soft gray April light it made a very admirable and gracious wealden prospect—villages and farms, purple wooding, fields and fallows, gathered and held in a dark network of hedges, irregularly meshed, but close and holding well together the rich country. At the Crown Inn the road to Cade Street turns off the highway; but before visiting the fair, lunch was imperative.

The Crown Inn stands alone on the highway, half a mile from Cade Street. Although so far removed from the fair it seemed to be a special

resort of the farmers and drovers attending it. The sour smell of cattlemen pervaded the house. Frowsy heads, tobacco smoke, and a quite unintelligible dialect filled the bar and the passages. Entering the public room, where one man was eating and two chattering, I was promptly invited to another apartment, the inn parlour. There some of the better-to-do farmers were at table, the simple fare being roast meat and bread and cheese; good and plentiful, and the eating notably expeditious. A young man, after shaking hands with an old farmer at the head of the table, left as I entered. When he had gone the old farmer, complimented a middle-aged farmer, about to leave also, on having so desirable an apprentice.

"Yes," said the middle-aged farmer, donning his overcoat, "he has a lot to do, and he does it well. I couldn't have an ornament idling about. It wouldn't pay me even if I had five hundred a year with him,—unless I could lock him up during the day. One useless hand pulls everything back." The last remark bears internal evidence of currency, and was, indeed, uttered with a proverbial twang. The old man applauded it, and smiled

with the naïve pleasure which the simple-minded feel at the sound of accepted wisdom from the lips of superiors; for to the old farmer the middle-aged farmer with the apprentice was something of a hero.

"If you make the lad a man like yourself he'll do well," he said.

The middle-aged farmer laughed a laugh compounded of deprecation and assent, and declared that all his apprentices had turned out well.

"He keeps three hundred cows," said the old farmer respectfully, when the great man had gone.

The fair itself was disappointing and insignificant in the last degree. It is true the press of it was over before I arrived; but the general opinion was that nothing deserving the name of a horse had been seen all day; and there was only one cheap-jack, one sweetstuff stall, and not a single merry-go-round or show of any kind. The staple of trade, a furry, ragged animal, long-limbed, hammer-headed, tame and tractable with hunger and overwork, occupied the costermongers and hawkers with much "hy-hying," and difficult galloping for another hour; then of a sudden the world collapsed

here; the muddy effervescence had effervesced, the dusty, petty market was over and done. The trampled, soiled road, a row of travelling vans in a lane, a black-eyed gipsy on a fence, and a dozen stout drinkers in the Half Moon Inn remained, the lees and sediment of an unfit survival. Indeed, the whole business was phantasmal; nobody seemed to know why exactly he had come there, and every outland visitor hurried away as soon as he could, wondering what devil possessed him.

Cade Street is named after Jack Cade, and a squat pillar a few steps east of the Half Moon bears this inscription:

• “Near this spot was slain the notorious rebel Cade by Alexander Iden, Sheriff of Kent, A.D. 1450. His body was carried to London and his head fixed upon London-bridge.”

Then follows an inept quotation from Hall’s “Chronicle”:

“This is the success of all rebels, and this fortune chanceth ever to traitors.”

“I object to that quotation. Here is a whole countryside misled by a decayed platitude. Cade and Jameson fail; Cromwell and Clive succeed.

Treason and rebellion are not a circumstance to success; it is the cause and the man that make success, whether the method be constitutional or unconstitutional. I should cut a fresher platitude than that on Cade's pillar if it were mine."

"What would your inscription be?"

"Why, this, perhaps: 'The weak to the wall; nothing succeeds like success.' That would be like a thorn in the mind of the peasant. It would have a meaning for him; he would read it every time he passed it. If he began to grow smug and contented with his lot, my inscription would take him by the neck, and shake him out of his fancied security: 'The weak to the wall! I am there now, and something worse is in store. Behind the wall the Union awaits me.' My inscription would stimulate him; would keep him miserable; would help him towards a germ of soul."

"Soul! 'The weak to the wall; nothing succeeds like success'! How can you beget soul by such a paltry statement of materialism?"

"I did not say it would beget soul, but I do say that these crude, one-sided sayings of a harsh worldly wisdom can plough dull natures,

turn up the soil at least, and give the sower a chance."

- "The sower! What sower?"

"Experience, which is both the plough and the harrow, and the seed and the sower."

XLIX.

CHAUCER.

To say of Chaucer that he remained a child is to say sooth. He is the lusty boyhood of English literature; but the said lusty boy was also an indefatigable student of books and of the world, with an exquisite tone in his young voice besides, and a thought beyond the reach of his soul. This lusty, romantic, free-thinking boy was in England the first of the moderns; a century before Montaigne we had in and for England the first of the moderns: a thing to brag of, a memory to worship.

L.

CONTEMPORARY POETRY.

CONTEMPORARY poetry is always minor poetry. Not until it has been loaded with the thought and emotion of generations of readers can poetry be said to be of age. It is the centuries that give poetry its majority.

LI.

CONSCIENCE.

THE deletion of conscience is well known to be a main factor in many a reputation. There are beings whose monstrous defects seem to be equivalent to the possession of genius.

LII.

ECLOGUE OF THE DOWNS.

Lucian. Urban. Eustace.

Urban. Skirting the southern seaboard, over-
land

The wind tramps from the Atlantic, drums and
gongs

Aerial, the music of his march.

The hedges ruffle bravely when he comes,
And shake their branches busked with coral buds,
The pregnant splceries of leaf and flower;
On this hand and on that the forests bow;
And harvests, newly sprung, a shallow tide—
The emerald down of golden crops to be—
Ripple and press about his shining feet.

Eustace. This way—across the valley.

Urban. Look behind!

The sea . . . Be patient, now; and wait! The sea
Leans up along the towering firmament;
In crisp resplendent curves the mail-clad wind
Advances channelward with echoing tread;

Against the silver main your Norman tower
 Looms black; with ebony the sharp clouds zone
 The belted sun; and shadows overscore
 The dazzling waters.

Eustace. . . . Under Erringham,
 Up Thundersbarrow Hill, through Mossy Bottom,
 Past Crooked Moon, and over Truleigh Top,
 Behind the tree-shorn Downs, by Small Dole,
 Beeding,
 Bramber, and on to Steyning, where we dine.

Lucian. We range from height to hollow, storm
 to calm,
 And vent our hoarded or our new-come minds.

Eustace. I met a starling yesterday . . . I swear
 By Æsop, then, I did! High on a pole,
 Above the humming wires he sat: the sun
 Adorned his damascened and burnished vest;
 He quivered like an artist as he plied
 His castanets; his yellow, clattering bill:
 An ostracised and rebel bird, alone
 Where myriads of his friendly kind abide.
 "Hello!" I cried, "What ails you?" "Who are
 you?"
 He snapped disdainfully. "I am," I said;

Acquainted with the tongues of beasts and birds,
A wandering understander, well-disposed.
Tell me the matter." "Oh, it's simply this,"
The creature grumbled, flouncing to the hedge:
I'm more intelligent and capable
Than any other starling on the Downs.
I proved it to the world in countless ways;
Impressed my unapproached pre-eminence
On every mind, and claimed authority.
They would have none of it! In me behold
A most ill-used, unhappy passerine."
"But did you, in and out of season, point,
Illustrate, and extol your gifts?" said I.
"Oh," went the bird "importunately." "Then
You failed, perhaps, on the offensive side.
Did you," I said, "with resolute assault,
Unflinching hardihood and poignant skill,
Attack, expose, deride and hold to scorn
The faults and foibles of the other birds?"
"Profound observer—for a man! I did,"
The starling cried. "I was meat and drink to me.
And all day still, though no one hears, I scold
The deep depravity of aviankind."
"What brought about this ignominy then?"

"My awkwardness," the bird said; and became
 More unctuously familiar. "I'm so wise,
 So able, and transcend so far the bounds
 Of starling sense, that all attempts to share
 The social duties of my kind abused
 Opinion, and the stigma stuck: *A gauche,*
Impertinent, disgraceful fowl, they said,
Whom nobody gets on with, beast or bird!
 And me a seraph, struggling hard to dwell
 On any terms at all with Hottentots!"
 "True; gaucherie," I said, "is vanity,
 Quintessence of conceit in man and fowl."
 "Vanity?" said the dubious starling. "Yes;
 A bird abandoned, who conceives himself,
 The centre of the universe, records
 The highest tide of vanity. You know
 You have no soul." "No soul?" the starling
 barked.
 "No soul," I said, "and hence your gaucherie.
 You think yourself of paramount respect,
 And like a stranded grayling misbehave,
 Having no soul; for soul alone concerns
 The universe. Now man, of yore enfeoffed
 In absolute monopoly of soul,

Without effrontery may claim to be
 The core of all creation. What I say"—
 'The pot said to the kettle," croaked the bird,
 And sought at once a more secluded perch;
 While I began to brood of what and why.

Urban. Of what and why? Nay, here and now,
 below,

Among the gables, dip and mount the masts
 Of coasting schooners; from the chimney-tops
 The smoke, spun-off, and woven by the wind,
 Is looped across the harbour.

Lucian. What and why:
 Conundrums all men ask, before the world,
 Or shamefast and in secret.

Urban. Here and now,
 Uncatechizable, the fieldfares, blown
 About our ears, like withered foliage whirl.

Lucian. I saw *not* here and now, but in a land
 That lies to windward of our crowded sail,
 A hero built a palace roofed with gold,
 The panel-work of sandal, and the walls
 Of orient alabaster. Genii,
 Obedient to his talisman, adorned,
 The lofty chambers, galleries, and courts

With beauty fetched from ancient treasures,
Elaborate looms and caves of earth and sea!
A goddess loved him; left her bower in heaven
To marry him; accomplished all his heart,
And bore him sons and daughters happily.
They lived in sweet contentment with their friends,
Gods, demi-gods, heroes, and men and women;
They studied all there was to know; they pleased
Themselves with art; and fought and overcame
Titanic rebels. Yet he dwelt alone.
For in his tower at midnight, "What," he said,
"And why?" and many folios filled with words
That never caught an echo of the truth.
One night when he was old an inner power
Bestirred him in his wistful solitude,
And drew him down through all his garnished
halls,
His colonnades, and fragrant arbours, out
By a little postern where a pit was dug—
For him, he knew at once. Before he laid
Him down to take his ease eternally,
Remembering all his thought, he yearned to speak
A word that might resolve the doubts of men.
So lifting up his forehead to the night

Instinct with stars, he shouted, "Live to Die!"
That very moment of his upward look,
And anguished utterance, from a wicket-gate
There issued opposite a hermit old,
Expelled his poortith by the self-same power
That drew the hero from his pageantry.
Marking the pregnant words, inane to him,
The hermit raised his voice and called aloud
With wrathful eyes and gesture, as they fell
Into the pit together, "Die to Live!"

Urban. I hate your destitute antinomies
That paralyze the will; and better love
The labourer busy in the bottom there,
Than airy palaces of wiseacres,
Or living tombs of envious eremites.
He stumbles on behind the plough as stiff
And rusty as his team; the share, disedged
And out of date; an elvish 'urchin jerks
The bridle; and at either furrow-end
Perforce he scrapes the clumsy blade, so thick
And greasily the heavy soil adheres.
An ancient implement, unhandsome work:
The numbers of the peasant's poem halt
A little on the sheet of earth he scores.

But showers and summer sunshine, time and tide,
Were never known eclectic; golden crops
When autumn reigns, delight to decorate
The shaky scrawl of overlaboured hands,
As well as rigid lines of tireless steam.

Lucian. Yes; but we cannot fling these questions
off:

They're in the blood, not fashionable wear,
And drive the simplest and the subtlest mad.

Eustace. And each of us makes answer as he
must,
In life and death, in every aim and deed,
Unwittingly—and gallantly.

Lucian. Nay, some,
Beside themselves, attempt to solve in speech
What hearted action only can atone.
Fantastic things men dream and do, distraught
By rebel sense, usurping soul, remorse,
Incongruent appeals and challenges,
Chiefly about the period when begins
The conflict in the tissues and the blood
Where age subdues the tyranny of youth.

Urban. Let youth and sense be tyrants sti...
accept

The sign—The Fox and Hounds!—What nook is
this?

Lucian. The least of hamlets, all unknown in
maps,

Disdained in country guides; a forge, a store,
Three dwelling houses and a wayside inn,
Behind the Downs, ensconced.

Urban. A dingy room:

The smell of stale tobacco; a cribbage-board
With pegs of Swedish matches; almanacks;
And taproom sawdust. Oh, escape, escape!

Lucian. But taste the Sussex ale before you fly;
And, for a reason, keep the room in mind.

Eustace. Why, this is honest malt; and in these
times

Of tar and cent per cent, that's something still.

Urban. But watch the sky-scape through the
drabbed panes!

The livid clouds, o'errun with glittering light,
Shrivel and flicker, up the firmament

Like tinder in a chimney, or shadowgraphs

Against a sheet; and the blue welkin, domed

And mantling with its watchet dust, the flower

Of azure, overhangs the world! Out! Out!

Sri Basanti, Bahav Sen

8/1-A, Mather Sen Garden Lane

Calcutta

NOT EXCHANGEABLE AND

NOT SALABLE.

Eustace. The wind has fallen; and not a whisper
 stirs
 The brimming silence; earth enchanted, waits
 A counter-spell.

Urban. I love that litter, strewn
 About the stithy yard: machines and ploughs;
 Old toothless harrows; rollers, rusty, cracked
 And clotted o'er with tell-tale soil; wheel-tyres
 Of sorts in bunches on the gable: all
 Reposeful, genial and luxurious.

Eustace. A prying woman opes a door and peeps—
 But not at us, she makes believe. She turns;
 She hesitates, she saunters purposeless,
 Then grasps her gown foothot across the way;
 And puts a period to the silence so.

Urban. A smothered, gurgling sound; a scarf of
 smoke
 Hung out upon the chimney-stack! The bellows
 Coughs and rumbles, sooty cobwebs blown
 To tatters in its throat; the muttering flames
 Burst from the drenched and close-raked dross;
 the shoe
 Cries on the anvil as the dull clang rings
 Of dead, on living iron, every blow

A bruise. A rustle in the hedge; some full,
Round notes, like water-drops that slowly plunge
In a deep, mossy well, the blackbird pipes
With saffron bill; the assembled starlings scold
In budding tree-tops, and the brazen catch'
And madrigal of fifty chanticleers
In fifty farms responds and dwindles wide
From knoll to knoll round Chanctonbury Ring
That copes with sable crest the silvery air.

Eustace. Now for your memory of The Fox
• and Hounds.

Lucian. When first I came on this forgotten
den

A year ago, I met a savage oaf,
That skulked and tiptoed in the frowsy room
So little liked by us. His eyes, deep-sunk,
Shifting and fiery, special menace held:
The internecine war of youth and age
Embroidered him, soul and body. "Sir," says he,
Waving his tankard, "did you ever hear
The Cat-call of the Universe?" "Not I,"
I said. "A time may come," he hisses. "Weeks
And months the beast is silent. Suddenly at night,
When the club-bore is doling anecdotes •

And pallid waiters yawn; or in the House,
 Just on the stroke of twelve, as Mister Smith •
 ' Ventures to think,' while a sub-secretary
 Sole on the Treasury-Bench for supper frets;
 Or on a stair in some perspiring crush,
 Where wit and wealth compete for elbow-room
 Awaiting all who reach the fabled top,
 I hear the Cat-call, and forsake the world."
 "What do you mean by Cat-call?" "Don't you
 know?
 The Cat-call of the Sphinx, the Universe." •
 "I know the ancient guess: Four feet at dawn;
 At noon, a biped; triple-legged at night."
 "Not to the purpose, sir," he cried enraged; •
 "And nothing can compel me to believe
 It took a parricide to find it out;
 Or that the Sphinx fell down and broke her crown
 When Œdipus made answer. Sphinx is now
 A symbol of the Universe; her call,
 The queries *what* and *why*, intolerably
 Hurl'd into my ears, at inauspicious
 Times, with subtle craft and iteration fell,
 More vehement than a tunnel-nearing train, •
 A factory whistle at the break of day,

Or siren of a liner in a fog.

Here, in this upland public-house I hide,

As you will—mark it—when you hear the Call.

Strange sights you'll see—as I do now! Look
there!

On Truleigh Hill a huddled city, built

Of blackest marble; houses, spires and towers

Without a door or window; pinnacle

And buttress furred and coated with a nap

Of soot—a rusty black upon the hewn

Or burnished marble's dense or glossy tint.

Between the courses swart smoke coils, crushed
through

By stifling pressure. Hark! The city reels

With heavy noise of voices numberless,

Shouting in unison—the muffled roar

As of a thousand bulls of Phalaris,

The bellowing of men in agony."

"Come out," I said, "Too much tobacco, beer,

The rancid room"—"No, here I stay," he cried,

"Until that roar becomes articulate.

Then will the Cat-call of the Universe

Be shouted down for ever."

Urban

Mad, I think.

Lucian. A humourist in Hinnom rather;
scorned

By fame; by fortune jilted; flayed and raw
As to his vanity; bankrupt in love;
But by a habit soldered into life,
Transmuting pain to pity, grudge to grin,
And solving all in morbid fantasy.

Urban. Some natures cannot leave the City of
Dis.

Eustace. And few escape a bitter sojourn there.

Lucian. But here are we at Steyning—reticent,
Antique; a tranquil place of oaken beams
Bow-bent with age; of gables, shingle roofs,
Of wooden houses, gardens, hanging eaves.
The railway came, but kept its distance; past
Is present here; old homeliness, a sense
Of room, and of an actual ease in life
Deliver and refresh the jaded thought,
Like a new image or a well-dreamed sleep.
Nor is an air of mystery wanting: doors
Withdrawn in shadowed entries, windows broad
And low, or high and secret, keep account
Of whispers, vigils, burning glances, tears—
Known only to themselves, mute witnesses

With meaning stored and memories of men.
Oh, towns and houses are your only ghosts!
Unlaid by Time that tosses ruthlessly
In hallowed bournes his plume of brindled steam,
Finger on lip, this Steyning haunts the flank
Of Chanctonbury Ring, a phantom town,
Forlorn a little, waiting by the way
With silent welcome for the wanderer.

LIII.

ECLOGUE.

Basil. Sandy. Brian. Menzies.

Sandy. What do you think of H——, Basil?
Hasn't he come to the front with a rush?

Brian. Come, Basil, what do you say?

Sandy. Basil's jealous; he is annoyed when we
talk of men who have attained popularity.

Brian. I daresay. So am I, sometimes. Most
obscure authors *are* jealous of the successful ones.

Sandy. What do you think of H——, Basil?
Really able, isn't he?

Basil. Very able. But why must we talk of H——, or of anybody? Let us discuss humanity without mentioning individuals and literature without naming books. Or better still, let us leave men and things alone, and simply express ourselves.

Sandy. Bravo! Let us go in for mere and sheer egotism!

Basil. You don't quite catch me. I don't mean that we should talk about ourselves. Let us *express* ourselves; let us utter our quintessences.

Brian. And how is that to be done?

Basil. Perhaps it is not to be done; but let us try.

Sandy. (*After a short pause.*) Well?

Basil. Brood, Sandy, brood. Be silent and wait. Only speak when something wells up from your inner consciousness; it may be your quintessence, the cream of your being.

Sandy. (*In a deep voice, after a long pause.*) Reviewing is in a parlous state.

Brian. Oh, not that!

Sandy. Here followeth the cream of me, willy-nilly. Reviewing is in a parlous state. Poets and novelists review poetry and fiction, turning, all

overstrung and raw, from their own creative labour to express an opinion on the creations of others; chokefull of themselves and bristling like the fretful porcupine with preconceived ideas, their judgment is constantly at fault. We need a new school of reviewers; a race of great men who shall stifle their own creative energies and devote themselves entirely to the exposition of the productions of others: Observe: not the creative critic, not the critic as artist; he is all for himself, and does with the works of others as the silkworm does with the leaves of the mulberry; but the critic who shall look at the author's work from the author's point of view.

Brian. The old cry, Sandy, of the author under the lash. There is so much fairly-written stuff published nowadays, which is nevertheless neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good 'red herring, that the most Protean temperament is soon worn out.

Sandy. I know, I know. But we have no critics. To have an opinion about a book and to be able to express it does not make a man a critic. We have had no literary critic since—well, I have almost said since Dr. Johnson.

Brian. Nonsense!

Menzies. Right, Sandy! We have expounders of theories of literature and mouthpieces of cliques, but no critics.

Brian. And what else was Johnson? He had a foot-rule for everything, as much as Matthew Arnold. The fact is, as far as my observation goes, we are only beginning to have critics at last. You find an irresponsible person who gives a hastily-formed impression without the exhibition of any standard or the statement of any formula; you feel as if you were falling through space, and you want somebody to clutch you up with a catchword. But that is criticism. The critic must have wings, and so must the reader; literature and literary criticism don't exist for those who can only walk. But we are drifting sadly. We were to discuss literature without naming books, and humanity without talking of individuals. Basil, has your cream risen yet?

Menzies. Leave Basil alone. It is an old saying that criticism is simply autobiography.

Sandy. Yes; but autobiography is not necessarily criticism.

Menzies. No; and that is where many writers

go wrong. Having heard that criticism is autobiographical, they drag in their sevennight's stint of epigram and paradox; and if they should allow themselves to be affected by the book they are supposed to review, it is only to follow the will-o'-the-wisp of association far from the starting point, because they have also heard of impressionism.

Sandy. That is a much abused and misunderstood word. All literature was from the beginning impressionistic. In Homer and Shakespeare you have deep impressions of the universe, as you have in Thackeray and Zola impressions of the surface of passing phases of portions of modern life. The spread of education has made the sensitized mind more common than it was, and so all kinds of incomplete and shallow people are able to record the impressions of which they are capable—superficial colour, half-tints and side-lights, odd shapes, echoes.

Menzies. That is so. And the mood of these shallow people, who are many, begins to affect the few who should know better. Detraction of Shakespeare, for example, is to be heard in most unexpected quarters. He has none of Snuburb's

sense of exquisite horror in the first buds of spring, and would have been unable to appreciate the manner of MacSquirt's curious work in silver-point, inspired by twelve years' study of the Bayeux tapestry; therefore he was neither poet nor artist; and that being so, it is a matter of no consequence that he was the greatest man who has expressed himself in literature.

Sandy. This prattle about art is the cant of the age.

Brian. What is an artist?

Sandy. Define.

Menzies. An artist, as he is imagined, at any rate, by those who keep up the outcry about him, is an inhuman being with the outward appearance of a man, who confounds right and wrong like a place-hunter, and sense and nonsense like a politician; a monster whose conscience is in his palate, and whose soul was given in exchange for a bottle of Benedictine and a world of hysteria. And yet he is as earnest and as brave as a martyr: his aim is to be open to all influences, to encounter the full stress of life.

Brian. And in order to do so you say he gets rid of his conscience, his soul, his humanity?

Menzies. Yes. It is like taking down the walls of a house to ventilate it.

Sandy. I always like what Goethe said: counselling himself, his advice was, "Take refuge in Art." Now, Goethe wasn't an artist; he was a great man, who found a way for himself in the endeavour after art; and I should say that the born æsthete might find himself in the endeavour to be a great man.

Menzies. Has that any meaning, now?

Brian. Not much, I think. You may as well say that it becomes a man religious by nature to endeavour to be irreligious.

Sandy. I wouldn't put it that way; but you know as well as I do that the fault of the votary is a want of healthy interest in life.

Menzies. Of course; we must all do daily battle with our prepossessions.

Brian. Well, Basil; you've had time to make your cream into cheese.

Basil. No; I've been listening. And I've come to the conclusion that it is impossible to express oneself absolutely; it must be in terms of men and things.

Menzies. I have sometimes thought that we might have a higher language, like the higher mathematics—pure expression, as it were.

Basil. Poets have tried it; but it's useless de-siderating speech for which there is no subject.

Menzies. Nevertheless, if the world lasts long enough there may yet be an actual Literature; a Literature unwarped by *arrière pensée* of prophecy, entertainment, or edification; a Literature which will be a Statement of the World.

LIV.

IBSEN.

“In my opinion, no writer reveals himself more fully than the dramatist. It is inevitable. The moment you begin to consider the springs of action and the motives of conduct there is one subject always at hand from infancy to death. Unconsciously, perhaps, at first, your intimate acquaintance with this subject appears in your work; then, if you are not a mere bocher and

harlatan, sooner or later the true source of man's knowledge of human nature is revealed to you. It is a terrible revelation; but you cannot, you are not, ignore it. You try to, doubtless; you even think you succeed in doing so; but your own accent and semblance are heard and seen in the vilest wretches, the grossest fools, as well as in the sweetest natures and the most heroic characters wherewith you mask the good and evil in yourself."

"But can a dramatist not portray at all, then, another than himself? Dramatists have drawn women successfully, for example."

"Yes, but think of the women. Wherever there is vital power at work the dramatist's people are of one mould and order. Compare Ibsen's women with Shakespeare's. However widely each author's women may differ among themselves, Cleopatra and Imogen are hardly distinguishable from each other when you contrast them with Hiordis and Asta Allmers. This sub-consciousness, what is basic in the dramatist, appears in all his creations."

"Well, of course, it must do so; when you come to think of it, it cannot be otherwise."

"Yes, but the literary world generally seems loath to acknowledge it. Fear lurks behind the loathing, I think. Byron is the type of the protesting author, terrified at the self-betrayal in his works."

"About Ibsen, however. He has betrayed himself—he, the strongest, most self-contained of all poets and dramatists."

"Strong, but not self-contained—anything but self-contained. His plays smoke with his personality. That is the very note of the man: that is his originality. The characters in the best-known of Ibsen's plays, his later ones, professional, middle-class, and lower middle-class people, are as dull and uninteresting as they can be; and yet he peopled the imagination of Europe for a while with these undistinguished beings, because they are all Ibsen. They were metal of no mark or value: Ibsen alloys them with his personality, stamps them with his image and superscription, and they become current throughout the world. A mistaken realism seems to advise the drawing of men exactly as they are. If it could be done, you would have at last something worthy to be

called a *caput mortuum*; but it is an impossibility. You could no more take crude man and place him in a novel or a play, that is, make him literature, than you could make a lump of iron ore into a carving-knife by laying it on the table along with a fork and steel. Humanity is the raw material of literature; the smelting, the fining, the casting, the shaping, the damascening, are the work of the creative artist, whose indispensable medium is his own personality."

"Well, then; how would you describe the personality of Ibsen?"

"Here is Ibsen himself—prim, resolved, magnetic."

"Sir, it is quite clear to me that no play is of the least importance unless every word and character in it has been minted from the author's personality."

"That is not your real meaning," said Ibsen. "You wish to say that no character, however carefully studied from life, can have any vitality in literature unless it has been *alloyed* with the author's personality, and cast over again."

"Yes; I believe that is more my meaning. The

author adds a percentage of himself and makes bell-metal of what was before harsh, untunable, and impossible in any steeple, tower, campanile or buoy. But, sir, I have heard it said that it is impossible to pluck the heart out of your mystery; that no one can find you in your plays."

"A mistaken judgement," said Ibsen. "My originality, like that of all original writers, consists neither more nor less in just this—that I have written myself large over all my work."

"Have you, sir? Then may I ask you to extract your personality from your plays?"

"I could not attempt it."

"Let me put a question or two. Do you consider yourself morbid?"

"I do. Stagnation, ease, does not interest me; only *disease*. Follow me closely in this; it is not mere word-catching. Life is the disease of the universe. The universe, I take it, is in pain with life; but life itself is joyful till it in turn becomes diseased, and conscience is diagnosed. My work has been one of diagnostication, and my discovery and revelation is this—that conscience, the disease of life, is now itself diseased: the mistletoe, the

disease of the oak, has broken out into new wretchedness of its own. It is my statement of the new wretchedness of the world that appeals to the world!"

"Then am I right in regarding you only and always as the literary artist?"

"On that I am not competent to pronounce. At one time many regarded me as the law and the prophets. As I said, you will find me in my plays."

"I wish you would extract your personality from your plays."

"I would rather not attempt it. Frankly, I seem to myself a man of such magnitude that neither my contemporaries nor I can take my measure."

"Sir, there is one side of your personality that has struck me very particularly of late. I mean the sinister, misanthropic, devilish mood, which in another age would indubitably have made you, for a portion of your career at least, a persecutor and torturer."

"I would not call myself a torturer," rejoined Ibsen hastily, startled out of his reserve. "My neurosis takes the form of anthropophobia rather than of misanthropy. Mankind terrifies me. The

vision of the joy of life, a riddle and a menace, haunts me—that is to say haunts the conscience of the age as it haunted St. Anthony; but the age being creedless, cannot lay the radiant apparition. My later plays are spells pronounced in vain against this terrible obsession. Sometimes the spells are of masterful directness, as in 'Rosmersholm' and 'Little Eyolf,' where the joy of life appears to be overcome; sometimes, with backward mutters of dissevering power, as in 'Hedda Gabler,' 'The Master Builder,' and 'Borkman,' where the joy of life, to repeat again my hateful phrase—is represented as triumphant; and note that the victory in every case entails the perdition of the puppets engaged on either side. Life eats its children. I am hag-ridden by that idea."

"In a measure you are, I believe; and a certain degree of terror enters into your misanthropy—for I insist that you are a misanthrope; but I cannot admit, as you seem to suggest, that you do not control your utterances, that you do not know very well what you are about."

"Then," said Ibsen, "do you regard me as an apostle with a message?"

"No, I don't. It is true a critic extorted from you yourself the confession that you are on the side of the knouters, and there can be no doubt that you believe the world ought to be distressed by Literature in order that it may be quickened to a livelier, more intelligent consciousness. As I said already, your extreme intolerance might have made you a persecutor in favourable circumstances, but not now, as being impracticable, because your intolerance, it seems to me, has gradually come to embrace every thought of man's heart, although you are too sane to wish for one fell stroke at a universal neck. No; I incline to the opinion that you are the literary artist before everything. It is true you caused a panic in certain quarters, and still people study you and puzzle over you, searching for light. But you have no message; you only state."

"I state *all* sides."

"Perhaps. But the devil's standpoint is a very favourite one with you."

"The devil's standpoint," mused Ibsen.

"Sir, is it not your ambition to start a *perpetuum mobile* of thought?"

"Yes," replied Ibsen. "My inferior ambition,

that is—the ambition inextricably associated with the desire of lasting fame. But, where are you leading me? What do you mean?”

“Pray sir, do not misunderstand me. I know and respect the Diogenes in your nature, but I am now considering the Teufelsdröckh in you—so abundant by your very greatness, the height and depth of your humanity. In ‘The Pretenders,’ your play of 1864, I think I detect your subconsciousness fully—the hidden Teufelsdröckh, which in you, as in mankind itself, broods over methods of perpetuating evil, and dreams of everlasting torment.”

“True,” assented Ibsen: “my lower nature is embodied in the diabolic Bishop Nicholas.”

“Yes, sir. Let me recall the plot of ‘The Pretenders.’ A letter in the possession of Bishop Nicholas would solve the doubt that has set King Hakon and Duke Skule at variance, and divided Norway against itself; but on his death-bed, the Bishop, by a special exercise of fiendishness—and a brilliant instance of your unmatched stagecraft—causes Duke Skule unwittingly to destroy this letter, in order that both Hakon and the Duke

may doubt and believe by turns, still swaying to and fro, and finding no firm ground beneath their feet—*perpetuum mobile*! That is the Bishop's dying catch-word—*perpetuum mobile*. 'I am, not strong in Latin,' he ruminates; 'but it means somewhat that has power to work eternally throughout all ages. If I myself, now could but——? That were a deed to end my life withal! To set wheel and weight and lever at work in the King's soul and the Duke's; to set them going so that no power on earth can stop them. If I can but do that, then shall I live indeed; live in my work—and, when I think of it, mayhap it is that which is called immortality.' There is no character in the great gallery of your painting which is so deeply branded on one's imagination as Bishop Nicholas. It is this vast egoism, with its complementary, deep-set misanthropy that writes 'Pełr Gynt' after 'Brand,' and 'The Wild Duck' after 'The Enemy of the People,' as if you were muttering to yourself, 'My readers! You think the problem of life is solved? See, I upset the fat in the fire again. Did you, mannikins, dream then that you had the heart of my mystery, that I had shown you

the sign of the times? You shall have no sign except the sign of the deluded mechanic—*perpetuum mobile!* Is there, sir, as much of Teufelsdröckh in you as that?"

"Have you read," asked Ibsen, ignoring the question, 'When We Dead Awaken'?

"I have. It is a most beautiful play—the apotheosis of madness."

"That is not unfair. One word before I go. My Mystery. From 'Emperor and Galilean' onwards, I have dealt with madness. That is my secret. I found out, as Shakespeare also found out, that madness is the thing. You cannot have the essence till the shell is broken and the kernel bruised."

LV.

SONG FROM "LA REINE FIAMMETTE."

THE bees beseech the bashful flowers,
 "Oh, open wide your scented bowers
 And lead us where the honey drips!"
 Your kisses murmur on our lips
 The song the bees sing to the flowers.

Impassioned April asks the snow,
 "Oh, crystals cold, when will you flow
 In molten tides beneath my beams?"
 And love says to our hearts it seems
 What April whispers to the snow.

The stars entreat the waning moon,
 "Good-night, but come again; come soon
 To light the adoring universe."
 Your pleading eyes in ours rehearse
 The cry the stars send to the moon.

LVI.

ENNUI.

"WHAT are you doing?"

"Killing time."

"You know better; you know you are eluding thought. At the back of your mind you feel that the first station of the passionate pilgrimage to intelligence is *ennui*."

"Don't worry me! The appeal to intelligence is always distressing."

"Certainly; because men in their hearts do not wish to be intelligent; they dimly guess that there are racks to be stretched on, fires to pass through, before intelligence is attained; and they resent the torture."

"Naturally! To be intelligent is to be unnatural. To be intelligent would be to understand the Universe. Now the Universe does not wish to be understood."

"True; she puts men off with her specious 'open secret.'"

"I know nothing about that; but it is not human nature to be intelligent; and I for one, decline. Anything but that! I'll make money; I'll go to church, or to the theatre; I'll ride motors, read novels, and drink large quantities of alcoholic beverages; but I refuse intelligence. And I ask you—I put it to you candidly, was anybody ever intelligent? Is intelligence possible?"

"At any rate, it is pleasanter to be strong."

LXII.

AT THE DOOR.

FROM a clime where the land's fair face
• No manner of usage mars,
And the wind, blowing pure out of space,
Gathers the scent of the stars,
He came, where the air has a sulphurous breath,
To the turbulent City of Death.

At the end of the world far down,
Obscure in the dark abyss,
Like a planet of baleful renown,
Glimmers the City of Dis:
As pulses that flicker the dim windows beat,
For the fog overflows every street.

And he heard—as he stood heart-sore,
But eager to enter in,
• All alone, in his shroud, at the door—
Sadly transcending the din,

A voice which he thought had been singing above
In the peaceable Kingdom of Love.

He had won, he had lost, hard-driven;
He knew what it is to wait;
And he fell at the last out of Heaven
Laughing aloud at his fate;
But he never knew fear till her wailing came
O'er the walls of the City of Flame.

From a clime where the land's fair face
No manner of usage mars,
And the wind, blowing pure over space,
Gathers the scent of the stars,
He came where the voice of his dearest one fell
On his shuddering soul out of Hell.

LVIII.

LIFE AND DEATH.

"CULTIVATE a good opinion of yourself; cultivate the highest opinion of yourself. Thus only can you dispense with the world."

"But why should I dispense with the world?"

"Because you will have to do so when you die. All men should live as if they were already dead."

"To whom, then, shall Cæsar appeal?"

"To Time; the Cæsar of all things."

LIX.

THE DYER'S HAND.

"THE most tragical words in all literature are Shakespeare's complaint—

'And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.'

"Why should these words appear to you so tragical?"

"That this paragon should have been dependent on playing and on the writing of plays for a living!"

"I am certain, it was not his occupation that perturbed Shakespeare; but the mere fact of his having to work for a livelihood. Had he been a provision-dealer or a stockbroker, a professor, a banker, a surgeon, Shakespeare would have complained of the dyer's hand. It was his dependence that galled him. He never forgave Fortune that he was not a gentleman."

"He was one of Nature's gentlemen."

"The phrase 'Nature's gentlemen' has always seemed to me the most pitiful pretence. If you mean by Nature, Fate and Fortune, all gentlemen are, of course, Nature's gentlemen. Shakespeare was not one of them."

"What is a gentleman?"

"A man of birth, breeding and affluence. There are very few gentlemen."

"But was it not inferior in Shakespeare to be discontented with his lot?"

"I leave that to the moral censor. I am certain

Shakespeare was jealous, not of gentlemen only, but of kings and emperors; and if he had possessed an income of a thousand pounds a day, he would have felt himself robbed so long as another could boast of an income of a thousand guineas a day. It was the will of Shakespeare, as it is of all men, to be king."

"Pardon! It is not, and never was my will."

"You think so, because your self-consciousness has not been broached yet. When that tap is set running, men learn what vintage they are of. To be king! To be the highest; to have all power, all wealth; to be absolutely inviolable!"

• "And the anarchist's bomb, the revolutionist's bullet?"

"Nothing: like typhoid or pneumonia, forms of death, and not always fatal. A man must have been sick with the dream of kingship before he is interesting."

LX.

LIKENESS AND UNLIKENESS.

ALL alike men breathe, eat and drink, procreate and die, entertaining themselves body and soul. They think that they are making empires, painting pictures, writing poems, founding religions: exercise and entertainment of their functions; that is all. But while there is this likeness there is absolute and universal unlikeness, from the mood and manner of heroism down to the finger-print of the criminal. No two minds understand in the same way the simplest idea. And when it comes to Religion! Consider the bungle of Saul, also called Paul, from which the western world suffers yet: that hysterical endeavour to apply universally the inapplicable sayings of Jesus—the exquisite, purely private, individual sayings of Jesus. Consider the bungle which Tolstoi makes to-day in the same attempt. It is always something entirely different from what their masters meant that disciples understand. Neo-Platonism, Neo-Catholicism, Neo-Hegolism! Hell! Let no man be another's disciple.

LXI.

HIGHEST AND BEST.

THE appeal to what is highest and best in men does not pay; a seeming appeal to what is highest and best does. I suppose the wealthiest corporations in the world are the Roman, the Greek, the Lutheran and the Anglican churches. As a trade, as an art, Religion pays; but whenever there is an actual attempt to transcend, the crucifix and the stake are ready: ostracism for the man of independent means, death by starvation for the poor man, are prompt and inevitable.

LXII.

SYMPATHY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

"I HAVE no sympathy with people who do not do what they want to do; and if they are doing what they want to do they require no sympathy."

"But who can do what he wants to do? Only those with independent incomes."

"I sometimes think so, too."

"I always think so. No one who has not an independent income can be held responsible for anything he does or says."

"And are people with independent incomes to be held responsible?"

"I cannot tell: I have never had an independent income."

LXIII.

EVOLUTION.

WE have mastered fire and lightning, water and wind, and made them serve us in war and commerce, in business and pleasure. These are powers of Nature; and what more is this complex force, Evolution, of which men speak in fear and trembling? Like other powers of Nature, it is and has been a bad master; but we shall shortly tame it, and make it a splendid servant.

LXIV.

PERSONALITY.

PERSONALITY, adored by mobs, is that which personalities hate in each other.

LXV.

A THING IMPOSSIBLE.

LITERARY criticism implies a contradiction in terms. It is impossible to give an account of one art except by another. Browning, the boys' poet *par excellence*, couldn't have written the "criticism as well as the poetry," in spite of his threat. Wagner gave a more or less successful account of his endeavour and meaning in music by the medium of another art, Literature namely; besides, he has his complex art of Music-drama, three arts interpreting and complementing each other. Rossetti also was able to employ two arts as the com-

plements of each other in a very special way. But literary criticism is impossible. Literature already exists in a literary form.

LXVI.

A DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE.

"If I must live with any one, give me a heartless woman."

"Heartless?"

"Yes; because a heartless person is never selfish."

LXVII.

AT TWENTY-ONE.

ONE age is chivalrous; another is puritanic; another licentious; this one cultured. The floods of chivalry, of puritanism, of licence, have each sown deposits in the strata of society, like fossils in black marble. The plasm of society has moulded itself round these and engrossed them. There were absurd knights; puritanism was itself an

absurdity; licentiousness, unspeakable: these bigotries being past, the world is better for them. One age, poetry overruns the wilderness of society; another, the religious feeling; in another, the beast is rampant: this age would let none of these run riot, but carefully tending them all, produce a well-ordered garden. The world is always young, and always sowing wild oats, with their deeply penetrating roots, their golden straw, and beautiful ears heavy with grain. At present, education is sown broadcast, a wild oat likely to yield a rich harvest. But it is a wild oat, an excess, a bigotry. How much can I know? Let me have the keys of the arcana of all science; let me discover an intermaxillary bone in man, and the idea of plants. Give me to read every book and carry in my portmanteau a diamond edition of the Greek classics to write transcripts from by the way. Let me mourn Théophile Gautier in melodious threnodies in four languages. Give me to know harlots, actresses, and the lady presidents of benevolent societies; let me be hail-fellow-well-met with blacklegs, pickpockets, prize-fighters, poets, princes, popes; let me be stroke of a University

crew, swim the Channel, winter in Italy, and shoot seals in autumn in the northern seas. My organs are over-sensitive: let me climb the steeple of Strasburg Cathedral and look down till my giddiness is conquered, and listen to its bell till my ears are burst or their delicacy strengthened. I am a woman: I will translate Æschylus; I will write an epic; I will don male attire and study every grade of life; I will speak on platforms; I will study medicine; I will pass competitive examinations with men; I am just beginning: I know not what I will do. We are cultured, ploughed, and sown and harrowed, over and over again: we turn up the seeds, too, to behold their fermentation and growth, so that there is as yet no crop; but the seeds die not, and the harvest will be.

LXVIII.

BLAKE.

THE portrait of Blake betokens in the large, prominent, beaming eye a powerful mind, audacious

and original—consciously original at all hazards. There was once nobility in the fine forehead, and there is still strength in the chin. The other features are those of a gossiping old woman. Intolerance, confusion, childish impatience sit between the wrinkled eyebrows, pucker the stubby nose, and pout in the petulant and garrulous mouth. It is an utterly reckless and abandoned face; the debauch of imagination pursued for years without restraint, with no law or licence except the craving for cerebral excitement, even though followed in the loftiest region the human intelligence can attain, seems in the case of the physically temperate and chaste Blake to have had the same effect on his features as is commonly ascribed to a course of sensuality. Impatience was Blake's chief characteristic: in respect of it he did verge on madness; it kept him ignorant, incompetent, poor—at the mercy of the Cromeks and the Hayleys. On the one side it held him grovelling on the level of Joanna Southcote; on the other it enabled him to touch the hem of Shakespeare's garment, and the hand of Michelangelo. A most extraordinary being! He would not be tamed or

taught. In his infancy his father gave up the task as hopeless; in his fourth year he saw men like trees walking, or at least a tree full of angels; and when he came to man's estate, there was nobody to purge his eyes. He imprisoned himself in his imagination, and became a mystic and system-monger; with him thought and language grew one with the thing thought and spoken of: figures of speech hardened into articles of faith. If you can imagine the eccentric and miraculous motions possible to a human being enabled to move about the world without having to bear the weight of the atmosphere, you have a material notion of Blake the mystic, bearing no weight of learning and knowledge, and so performing fantastic evolutions at which men laugh and the angels weep. The mystic will soon be forgotten, not so soon the sweet, keen singer whose songs are dew and light.

LXIX.

GOD.

ALTHOUGH there were no God, God would remain the greatest notion man has had. It is a question, however, whether this notion will be permanent in the mind of the race. If it should be permanent, and there be any truth in Evolution, who can say that God may not yet be evolved?

LXX.

NECESSITY.

THE mother of invention? Yes; and the mother of all mistakes, and the prophetess of failure.

LXXI.

SHAKESPEARE'S FLOWER.

"SHAKESPEARE'S flower?"

"The wild rose. I think the roses are mentioned oftenest, although he may have said finer things about the violet and the cowslip."

"I question if he has. Now that you remind me of it, Shakespeare has an image of the rose and the canker-worm, and it appears in all his earlier work, and in every stage of development from the unadorned question in 'Incrèce'—

'Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?'
to the perfect utterance in 'Twelfth Night'—

'She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek.'

This is Shakespeare, the artist. An image haunts him, and he attempts to lay it again and again; he does not go away from it, but rather encourages its visits, until at last he puts it to rest, embalmed in Viola's sweet-smelling words."

LXXII.

A MODERN INSTANCE.

"Won't you play? I'll give you thirty in a hundred."

"I can't be bothered."

"Then, of course, the game's not worth the chalk."

"Not to me. I am like the old elder in Morayshire who told the kirk session one Sunday evening, when each member—the outlandish idea of it!—was required to state what he considered his own special gift or grace, that he had a 'great talent for nait'ral rest.'"

"Meaning sleep?"

"Perhaps that was in his mind, too; but he meant inertia, I think."

"It is really a disease."

"That may be. I know of a man who has the utmost difficulty in getting out of any enclosed space—drawing-room, restaurant, theatre, church. He seems to be enchanted, like a rooster in a

chalked ring. I watched him one night at a house in Curzon Street. The rooms were crowded, and he wandered about them for a stricken hour, looking very purposeful all the time. When his conduct was noticed he became the one subject of talk; a lane developed for his convenience through the reception-rooms; but he remained entirely unconscious of the effect he created, following his nose resolutely. At last I spoke to him: he seemed to know nobody there. 'Do you think I could get out of this?' he asked me anxiously. 'It might be managed,' I said. 'For example'—we were standing in the hall—'there's the door.' 'But I haven't my hat and overcoat; and the footman must call a cab.' These things were put right for him; but when the footman intoned, 'Hansom-carriage blocks the way!' he hesitated on the threshold; his face grew pale, then livid; he drew back and looked round at me with a desperate smile. 'I'm coming with you,' I said. He clutched my arm, and we entered the cab together. Immediately he began to smoke a madura cigar, and became entirely cheerful and the best of company."

"A recurring paralysis of the will like that must

be an affliction; but I suppose most people with nerves really alive have occasional experiences of the kind; indeed I should say there are no grown-up folk in the world who have not at some time or other been puzzled by inability to do some simple thing they wished to do."

"Probably; but I took this man to be a strayed king, unaccustomed to attendance, and, yet, unknown to himself, miserable in the last degree, unless he is served obsequiously."

LXXIII.

THE SOUL.

FROM aimless conflict and the tangled urn
Of asps, decaying flowers and Dead-Sea fruit,
The dross and vapid recrement of life,
The soul of man in golden human cells
Of wrought experience sedulously built,
A sweeter aromatic honey hives
Than reservoirs of carder-bees that drain
The perfumed nectar of the wilderness,

And store it underground in mossy founts.
 'Unhappy wisdom tastes and learns to laugh,
 With dulcet breath; unhappy folly tastes
 And learns its own inherent happiness.

LXXIV.

SAPPHO.

Playwright. Interviewer.

I. I understand you have made a play out of Daudet's "Sapho."

P. Yes.

I. What do you think of the novel?

P. I am afraid I have become too familiar with it. It leaves me with a memory of superficial realism and essential untruth, and a dull sense of something nauseous.

I. I agree with you, in a measure. To begin with, I think the title a shameful abuse.

P. So do I. Of the actual Sappho, whose "soul seems to have been made up of love and

poetry," and whom the high poets of all ages have adored, there is nothing at all in Daudet's book. You remember the epigram by J. D., ascribed to Marlowe, "In Gellam," who was

no more

Than a sweet, filthy, fine, ill-flavoured whore."

That is Daudet's Sappho, with the added nastiness implied in the ridiculous La Gournerie's phrase, "Toute la lyre."

I. And that is not your Sappho?

P. Of course not!

I. Has the idea of the true Sappho influenced your reading of the character of your heroine?

P. It has, very considerably. She comes before me like one of those

"gay creatures of the element
That in the colours of the rainbow live,"

all compact of mirth, of love and poetry; a delightful overflowing nature that should have been guarded from the cradle, wandering unprotected in the waste places of the world; but preserved from the worst partly by that *fond gaillard*, on

which Burns relied, and mainly by a real sanity of body and mind.

I. You have just quoted Milton. Have you employed verse in your play at all?

P. I have. I believe that blank verse can be employed even in the most modern play very effectively and with perfect propriety; and when it was proposed to me to make a version of "Sapho"—it was so long since I had read the novel that I had almost no memory of it—the idea occurred at once that here might be the source of a modern play in which no one could find verse out of place.

I. And you are still of that opinion?

P. Yes. As we have already agreed, the title is misleading; there is no poetry in Daudet's woman; but I trust there is in mine.

I. Have you used much verse?

P. A good deal.

I. Can you tell me what it is that determines the use of verse in your dialogue?

P. Yes; I use it when it occurs to me to do so. Then, in revisal, some of that will be reduced to the ranks again—i.e., to prose.

I. Does the alternation of prose and verse not suggest patchwork rather?

P. No. It does to the eye on the printed page of course; but it is not so actually.

I. Then how do you manage the transition from prose to verse?

P. It is as natural as can be. Pentameter lines constantly occur in writing prose dialogue, as they do also in actual speech; and you proceed from one of these.

I. And what kind of blank verse do you write?

P. In plays I write dramatic blank verse: that is to say, the speaker attends to the sense; and the lines look after themselves.

I. I confess I don't quite see it. A work of art should be a whole.

P. I know where you are. You open up an endless question—the debate of the homogeneous and the heterogeneous. For my part, I prefer what is called the heterogeneous or artistic play as against the homogeneous or artificial one. Life is heterogeneous; and art must be parallel to life.

"As You Like It," a most heterogeneous and artistic

play, is much closer to life than the artificial homogeneous "School for Scandal."

I. And is the plot of your play as diffuse as that of "As You Like It"?

P. Oh no! My plot is simple and compact. I am referring to variety of mood and the consequent variety of expression.

I. But life, or let me say, the world, is also homogeneous. The heterogeneous, indeed, is the homogeneous.

P. Quite so; and we march serenely into the Serbonian bog.

I. No; I come out of it!—You have spoken unkindly of Daudet's "Sapho." Do you remember that it was written with a purpose?

P. Oh, yes! Daudet inscribed it "for my sons when they are twenty years old." I, however, am quite certain that such a book as Daudet's "Sapho" defeats its purpose. You will not disgust young fellows bent on a mud bath by showing them how muddy it is: on the contrary, you increase their curiosity and incite them to the plunge.

I. Have you a purpose in your play?

P. I would not use the word purpose. But

certainly I wish everything I write to have meaning.

I. Meaning?

R. Yes; meaning.

I. Well. Do you follow the incidents of the novel closely?

P. Those I have selected; yes, pretty closely; although they receive generally a different complexion.

I. And the persons?

P. Alice Doré, Rosario Sanchez, De Potter, Le Grand père, and some minor people I have rejected, as not belonging to my play; and those I have selected I have recast.

I. By the way, do you know Daudet's own version in collaboration with M. Adolphe Belot?

P. I have not seen it performed; but I have read it very carefully.

I. And did you benefit by it?

P. Very much. It showed me definitely what not to do.

I. Ah! And what do you think of your own version?

P. I have answered too many questions already.

LXXV.

SUNSET IN THE WEST END.

OVER the Marble Arch a crimson sunset flared and sank behind Hyde Park; the lamps in Oxford Street gleamed like flakes of light fallen from the sun as he toiled up and down the sky, a seeming Pre-Copernican, bearing the burden of day. In Bryanstone Square, Portman Square, Grosvenor Square, Berkeley Square, and in the garden of Devonshire House, elms, limes, and maples began to look grey and ghostly as darkness climbed quickly out of the east. Dusky green ivy, dusky crimson creepers draped many of the high houses. The sparse leaves in the lofty elm-tree tops spotted the pale lavender sky that kept still a gleam of day, though all was dark below. The chill wind whispered of winter; night set in; and in Piccadilly life, like a tidal wave, began to rise and pour towards the theatres and halls and hidden nooks in which it clangs and seethes and spends itself.

LXXVI.

CRITICISM.

I SEE a pitman, somewhat ragged as to his attire, who has laboured all day underground, trudging home and humming a tune by the way. A snob, on horseback perhaps, or in a brougham or a motor car, or on foot and ragged too, looks after him and cries out, "I say, my man! There's a hole in your coat! There's a hole in your coat!"

LXXVII.

FORKS.

"SOME men are tridents, some are dinner-forks, some are pitch-forks, and some have but one prong. Of these last are the short-story men, the 'strong men' of fiction. They remind me of the Parisian *chiffonier*, who gathers from frequented places with his pointed stick odds and ends of paper and

rag. They are an insufferable nuisance; their pens are always ready furbished; if you so much as hint an idea, an experience, an episode, they stab it up at once and thrust it into their wallets among an *omnium, gatherum* of other half-ideas, experiences, and episodes, where it lies till it is 'high,' and is then brought forth as, 'strong meat.'

"And who are the dinner-forks?"

"Average men I suppose."

"And the pitch-forks?"

"The critics."

"And the tridents."

"My friends, and I."

LXXVIII.

THE SONG OF THE LARK.

THE song of the lark has taken entire possession of the air. Like a heaven-high vine it garlands the whole firmament. In the rookery or among the sheepfolds where the hillside is plaintive with the bleating of lambs, the larks are inaudible;

but when these undergrowths, jungles, and mere wildernesses of sound are past, the hanging gardens of the larks absorb the senses. From dawn till dusk, and from the middle-spring through the full blaze of summer to the smouldering golden moons of autumn, these garlands of sound, leaf and flower and fruit, fresco and fantasy and arabesque, will wreath and overrun the shining air.

LXXIX.

MR. MEREDITH AND NATURE.

IN Mr. Meredith's poetry Nature is always intellect. Even when he writes of "Woodland Peace," it is the peace of faculty, not absorbed in contemplation, but employed in strenuous thought. Nature with him is above suffering; she understands, and rejoices in her agonies as in her triumphs:

"We brood, we strive to sky,
We gaze upon decay,
We wot of life through death,

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NOT EXCHANGEABLE AND

How each feeds each we spy.

We question not, nor ask

The silent to give sound,

The hidden to unmask,

The distant to draw near.

And this the woodland saith:

‘I know not hope or fear;

I take what’e’er may come;

I raise my head to aspects fair,

From foul I turn away.’

Sweet as Eden is the air,

And Eden-sweet the ray.”

Since Nature is intellect containing all knowledge, the singing lark becomes “the hills, the human line,” the meadows, the fallows, labour, the dance of children, “thanks of sowers, shout of primrose-banks”; in fact, the lark is Walt Whitman in his knowledgable mood—a joyful, incarnate catalogue. Everything is busy; rapt in thought, and in the embodiment of its ideas:

“I turned and looked on heaven awhile, where

now

The moor-faced sunset broadened with red light;

*Threw high aloft a golden bough,
And seemed the desert of the night,
Far down with mellow orchards to endow."*

Nature, as intellect, is supernatural; her witchcraft transcends all alchemy, and the poet, speaking for her, produces such magic as these italics—and in her own method, by employing, namely, what the builders reject, a helpless inversion, which were it not poetry, would be unspeakable doggerel. It is in "Love in the Valley," a boy's poem, redistilled in manhood, that one finds the fullest, because least conscious, statement of intellectual Nature. Woman, the intellect and matrix of the world, is, perforce, the very sign and substance of Nature to the passion and character of man. The ideal creature in "Love in the Valley"—a poem perfectly unique, strung of the treasure found once at least where the rainbow meets the land—is the type of Nature:

"Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows,
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.

Deals she an unkindness, 'tis but her rapid measure,
 Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no
 less:

Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers
 with hailstones
 Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and
 bless.

* * * * *

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,
 Arm in arm, all against the raging West,
 Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,
 Brave is her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.
 Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
 Whispered the world was; morning light is she.
 Love that so desires would fain keep her change-
 less;

Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free."

Mr. Meredith conceives Nature as a passionate
 intellect, constantly becoming; happy in her pains
 and pleasures, and not without a thought for those
 who cannot be happy; a restless and untiring
 experimenter in seasons, tempests, light and
 shade, sunsets, blossoms; terror and mystery to the

coward, to the merely emotional animal; love and mystery unveiled to strength and talent.

“Never is Earth misread by brain:
That is the welling of her, there
The mirror: with one step beyond,
For likewise is it voice; and more,
Benignest kinship bids respond,
When wail the weak, and then restore
Whom days as fell as this may rive,
While Earth sits ebon in her gloom,
Us, atomies of life alive
Unheeding, bent on life to come.”

LXXX.

THE POET.

ANYONE who has ever trusted himself knows that knowledge is in the air; and that in brooding, in loafing, in living, knowledge is absorbed by the pores of the body. The eyes and the ears are the

main thoroughfares of knowledge, but there are many by-ways intractable to sight and hearing, devious and erratic in supposition, but as marked and inevitable as the seemingly wanton paths of fish in the river or of birds in the air. The body, the whole body, is also the soul. It is the nerves, the heart, the liver, the seed, that apprehend and think and feel. The seat of memory is probably in the muscles. The brain is only a register and sifter—at the highest an alembic. Imagination gathers the flower of the whole anatomy. It is in this that the poet differs from the thinker, with whom it is the habit sometimes to confound him. A thinker is one who has permitted his brain, the chief servant of his soul, to get the upper hand, just as the epicure gives the reins of power to his palate. In the poet the whole assembly of his being is harmonious; no organ is master; a diapason extends throughout the entire scale; his whole body, his whole soul is rapt into the making of his poetry. Every poet is a new experiment; all poetry is empirical. And this is simply saying over again that there is such a thing as poetry, and that poets are born into the world. A poet is, always

a man of inordinate ambition and of inordinate vanity. In his heart he says, "I want my poetry to be remembered when Homer and Dante and Shakespeare are forgotten."

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